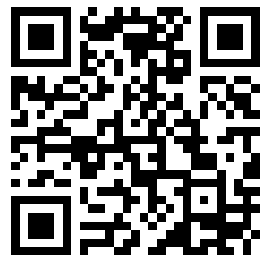

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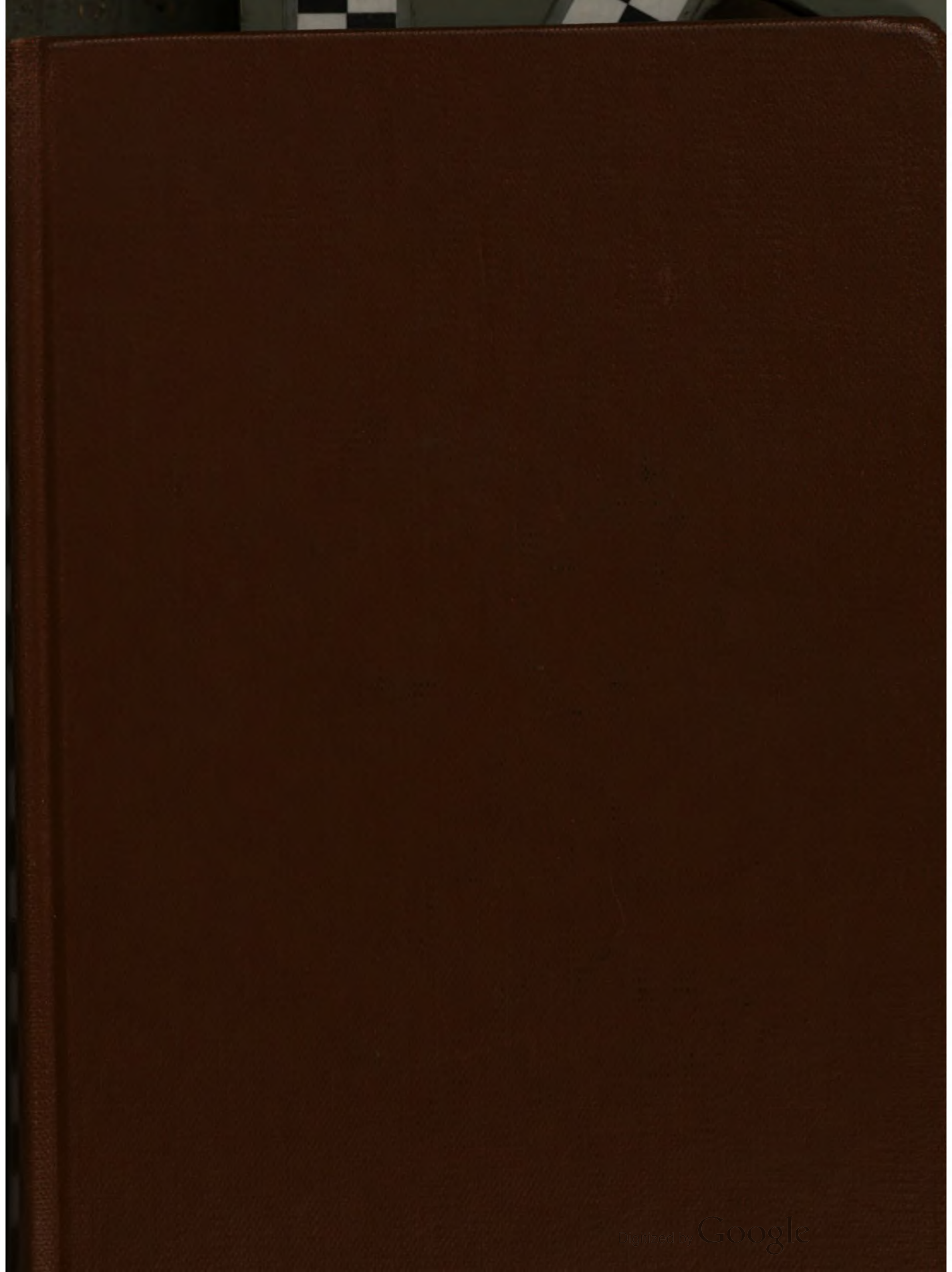


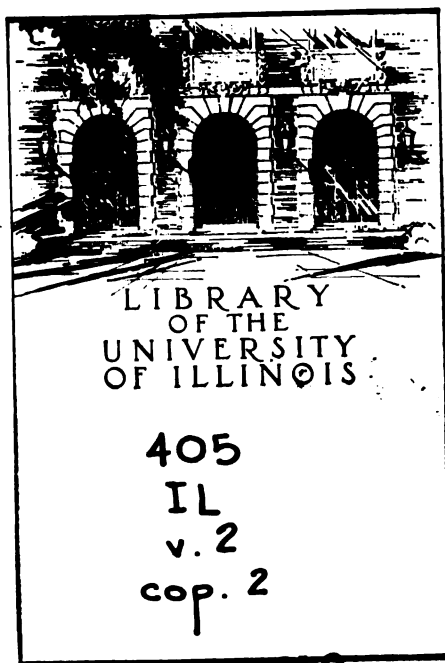
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IN
LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY
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VOLUME II

URBANA, ILLINOIS

1916

BOARD OF EDITORS

GEORGE T. FLOM

WILLIAM A. OLDFATHER

STUART P. SHERMAN

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**PUBLISHED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
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URBANA**

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THOMAS WARTON

A BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL STUDY

BY

CLARISSA RINAKE

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

1916

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PREFACE

The purpose of the following study is to estimate the intrinsic and historical importance of Thomas Warton. To this end it discusses the relation of all his work—his poetry, his criticism, his history of English poetry, his various antiquarian works—to the literary movements of his day. This frequently underrated author was more than a small poet, worthy critic, and dabbler in literary antiquities; he was an important contributor to the literary reaction in the eighteenth century. Largely because of his enthusiastic study of the middle ages, he was able to supply in every department of literature which he entered an important quality previously lacking. To poetry he added a new theme and much picturesque imagery, and he furthered the return to nature and the sonnet revival. In criticism his study of the past produced the historical method and helped greatly to emancipate literary criticism from the tyranny of the rules. To literary history he contributed a fuller study of English poetry in its earlier periods than had previously been attempted, and he showed that the poetry of the neglected mediæval period was at least as important as classical literature in the development of modern English literature.

To the main facts concerning Warton's life and writings, as they are given by Sir Sidney Lee in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, it has not been possible to make many additions. I have, however, been able to make use of sixty-two unpublished and apparently hitherto unnoticed letters in the British Museum and in the Bodleian and the Harvard College Libraries, and a collection of miscellaneous notes in the Winchester College Library. I have also referred to the manuscripts at Trinity College and in the possession of the descendants of the Warton family, which the previous biographer mentions. The bibliography of the sources of the *History of English Poetry* has been compiled both as an evidence of Warton's industry and erudition and as an interesting list of the books on such a subject available to a scholar of that period. In preparing it, I have not depended upon conjecture, other bibliographies, or library catalogues, but have carefully compared hundreds of the references in the history with the originals to make sure of finding the books and editions actually used. I have previously discussed Warton's criticism of Spenser in the *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, March, 1915, and Warton's poetry in the *Sewanee Review*,

April, 1915. I published twenty-six of the new letters with notes in the *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, January, 1915.

In the pursuance of this study I have, of course, laid myself under obligations to many other students of the eighteenth century and the romantic movement. In my investigations I have been courteously helped by the librarians of the various libraries in which I have worked. Special thanks are due Miss Catherine E. Lee for cordial permission to examine the Warton manuscripts in her possession; Mr. M. H. Green for every courtesy in his power to offer in the furtherance of my investigations at Trinity College, Oxford; Mr. Herbert Chitty for placing at my disposal the Warton material at Winchester College; Miss E. J. O'Meara for bringing to my attention a copy of a rare edition of Warton's poems in the Yale University Library; Mr. L. M. Buell for calling to my notice the Warton-Percy letters in the Harvard College Library; Miss Jennie Craig for valuable help in the University of Illinois Library; Mr. D. H. Bishop for information concerning Joseph Warton; and Professor H. S. V. Jones for helpful suggestions and criticism. Most of all, however, I am indebted to Professor S. P. Sherman, at whose suggestion this work was undertaken, and whose wise and genial counsel has directed its progress. Professor W. A. Oldfather has kindly assisted in seeing the work through the press.

C. R.

Urbana, Illinois.

CHAPTER I

ANCESTRY EARLY LIFE OXFORD

Family tradition derived the Warton family from a very ancient and honourable one, the Wartons of Warton Hall, Lancashire, through a collateral branch which had migrated to Beverley Parks, Yorkshire, where the then head of the family, Michael Warton, was knighted by Charles I, during the Civil Wars.¹ With the defeat of the royalist cause the family estate was so impoverished by heavy fines that they were unable to maintain the rank of gentry, and Laurence Warton, second brother of Sir Michael, removed to Redness in the vicinity of Sheffield. His second son, Francis, who probably went into the church and migrated to the south of England, is very likely the same Francis Warton of Breamore, Hampshire, who was the great-grandfather of Thomas Warton,² the historian of English poetry. Certain it is that Thomas Warton's seal bore the Warton arms,³ 'Or, on a chevron azure, a martlet between two pheons of the first.' Nothing further is known of Francis Warton except that he destined his son Anthony for the

¹According to John Warton, the laureate's nephew, who, however, gave conflicting information to the biographers of his uncle and father. See Mant's *Poetical Works of Thomas Warton with . . . Memoirs, etc.*, 2 vols. London 1802, vol. I, p. ix, and Wooll's *Biographical Memoirs of . . . Joseph Warton*, London 1806, p. 2 and note.

The Lancashire Wartons seem not to have considered the Wartons of Beverley to belong to their family. 'Edward B. Dawson, of Aldcliffe Hall, Lancaster, descended from a collateral branch of the Wartons of Warton Hall, Carnforth, in a letter to E. R. Wharton, dated Jan. 10, 1896, says that he never heard of the Wartons of Beverley being at Warton. His ancestors were living at Warton Hall in 1725, and for long before, as their records extend backwards at Warton for over 375 years (—1521).' Bodleian Library, MSS. Wharton, 14 f. 22b.

On the other hand Richard St. George's visitation of Yorkshire, 1612, derives the Wartons of Beverley from a Christopher, and a John, "of Warton." J. Foster: *Visitation of Yorkshire*, 1875, p. 386, quoted in MSS. Wharton, 14 f. 11.

²See Appendix A.

³I have seen several impressions of it upon Warton's letters, and the new paneling in the Chapel at Winchester College has a copy of it as Joseph Warton's among the arms of the masters of the college.

church, and sent him, in 1666, when he was a lad of sixteen to Magdalen College, where he was entered as a 'pleb.'⁴ Later he became a 'clerk,' took the usual degrees, received a number of church preferments, and settled in the living of Godalming, in Surrey.⁵ Of his three sons, the two eldest were deaf and dumb, and one of them, a painter of some promise, died young.⁶ The third, Thomas, we may presume had some slight defect of sight sufficient to give point and sting to Amhurst's sobriquet of 'squinting Tom of Maudlin,'⁷ but not serious enough to hinder his progress either at Oxford or in the church. It is perhaps to this unfortunate inheritance that his son's, Thomas Warton's, slight impediment of speech was due.⁸

Thomas Warton the elder seems to have been a man of some independence of thought, though of very moderate ability. At Oxford he was conspicuous and popular for his Jacobite sympathies, being the author of a satirical poem on George I, called *The Hanover Turnip*, and verses on the Chevalier's picture.⁹ The extant poetry written by this Thomas Warton does not show that he had any great claim to the poetry professorship on account of the excellence of his verse, and it was probably his political bent rather than his literary ability that led to his election to that office in 1718 and his re-election five years later in spite of considerable opposition. His incompetence as a professor and a sermon which he preached against the government were the subjects of sarcastic and vigorous exposure and attack in Amhurst's *Terræ-Filius*,¹⁰ but his reputation seems not to have suffered seriously therefrom.

Although a friend of Pope, the elder Warton was not altogether of his poetical faith. He was an admiring reader and imitator of

⁴Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses*, Early Series, 1891. IV, p. 1577.

⁵This Anthony Warton was not the author of the *Refinement of Zion*, published in 1657, ascribed to him by Wooll.

⁶Mant, *Op. cit.* p. i.

⁷[Amhurst]: *Terræ-Filius: or, The Secret History of the University of Oxford; in Several Essays*, etc. London 1726, p. 48.

⁸Johnson likened Warton's manner of speech to the gobble of a turkey-cock, and the editor of the Probationary Odes declared that when Warton was about to be ejected from the royal presence by a sturdy beef-eater, he was recognized in time to avert the catastrophe by a 'certain hasty spasmodic mumbling, together with two or three prompt quotations from Virgil.' (Mant, *op. cit.* p. cvi). Even Daniel Prince, the Oxford book-seller, who had no motive for ridicule, testified that his organs of speech were so defective that he was not readily understood except by those who were familiar with his manner of speaking. (Nichols: *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century*, etc. 9 vols. 1812-15. III, p. 702.)

⁹*Terræ-Filius: or, etc.* p. 49.

¹⁰Nos. X, XV, XVI.

Spenser and Milton,¹¹ and wrote the first imitations of runic poetry, two poetical versions of Latin translations quoted by Sir William Temple from the song of Regnor Ladborg, a northern king.¹² These odes are much more poetical than the feeble Spenserian imitation, *Philander, an Imitation of Spenser, occasioned by the death of Mr. William Levinz, of M. C. College, Oxon. Nov. 1706*,¹³ which is significant only for its early date, though both attempts are important as showing one of the sources of the romantic tastes of his more gifted sons. The poems of Thomas Warton composed a small volume published by his sons¹⁴ in 1748 in order to pay the small debts left by their father, of whom both seem to have been extremely proud. The runic odes, which thus appeared a dozen years before Gray's¹⁵ and Percy's¹⁶ northern poetry, must have furnished them with some suggestion for expressing poetically the interest in northern mythology so keenly aroused by Mallet's *Introduction à l'Histoire de la Dannemarc*.¹⁷

It is impossible to say when the elder Warton's poems were written, perhaps after he had retired from the poetry professorship—he had some years previously gone to reside regularly at his vicarage at Basingstoke—and had withdrawn still more from Oxford society; they were the parerga of a life busy with the successive vicarages of Framfield, Woking and Cobham, which he held in addition to his living at Basingstoke, and with the Basingstoke grammar school, of which he was master. His sons did not even know of the existence of his poems until they found them among his papers after his death and after both sons had given evidence that they had already come into their real poetical patrimony.

Of Elizabeth Richardson, the mother of the Wartons, it is impossible to discover more than that she was the second daughter of Joseph Richardson, rector of Dunsfold, Surrey, who was also a younger son of

¹¹Thomas Warton the younger relates an anecdote to show that his father was the means of calling Pope's attention to Milton's *Minor Poems*, with which he was wholly unfamiliar, and that he thus led to the sprinkling of phrases from Milton in the *Eloisa to Abelard*. See his edition of Milton's *Poems upon Several Occasions*. 2nd ed. London, 1791. preface p. x.

¹²Temple's *Works*, ed. 1720, I, p. 216.

¹³A manuscript copy of this poem, probably the original manuscript, dated at Mag. Coll. Oxon, Sept. 29, 1706, is in an uncatalogued manuscript in Winchester College Library.

¹⁴Joseph Warton's name alone appears on the title-page, but Thomas, who was yet an undergraduate at Trinity, was consulted. Wooll, *Op. cit.* pp. 214-215.

¹⁵See Gray's *Works*, ed. Gosse, I, p. 60, and Walpole's *Letters*, ed. Toynbee, V. p. 55 and VII, p. 175.

¹⁶See Phelps's *English Romantic Movement*, Boston 1893, p. 142.

¹⁷Published in 1755, and translated by Percy in 1770.

a Yorkshire family of some means and education, the Richardsons of North Bierley, several members of which attained some distinction in the church. Mrs. Warton died at Winchester in 1762.¹⁸

It was at the vicarage at Basingstoke, the ninth of January, 1728, the year that his father's occupancy of the poetry professorship terminated, that Thomas Warton the younger, the poet and Oxford don, the critic and historian of English poetry, was born¹⁹ in a home comfortable, but neither luxurious nor fashionable, where there were refinement and intellectual gifts above the average. His brother Joseph, the master of Winchester College, to whom he was singularly attached throughout his life, and his sister Jane were both several years older than Thomas.

As a child Thomas Warton showed many signs of precocity—a fondness for study, a passion for reading, and an early bent to poetry. He was no doubt greatly encouraged in these pursuits by his father, certainly a man of ready sympathy, who, without in any way losing the respect of his sons, made himself their close friend and confidant.²⁰ He had naturally assumed the task of their education, and Thomas, at least, had no other master until he went up to Oxford, a lad of sixteen. His education was, of course, largely classical, and the elder Warton was able to communicate to his sons not only a substantial Latin style, but a genuine enthusiasm for classical studies which neither of them ever lost. It is possible that Thomas was more fortunate than otherwise in remaining so long under his father's instruction; Joseph, writing to his father from Winchester School, expressed the fear that the Latin style of composition which was there permitted to be used would not meet with his father's approval.²¹

No doubt a very valuable part of Thomas Warton's early education consisted in browsing in his father's library, which must have been a fairly well-stocked one, and probably contained more curious old books than were usually included in the libraries of country clergymen. Spenser must have been read early and often to have gained so firm a hold upon Warton's affections, and probably other early poets, perhaps even a few romances. Certainly Milton was a favourite; perhaps the early edition of the *Poems on Several Occasions*,²² or Fenton's edition,²³

¹⁸Anderson's *British Poets*, London 1795, vol. XI, p. 1053.

¹⁹'January the 9th, 1727-8, Thomas, the sounne of Mr. Thomas Warton, Vicar, by Elizabeth his wife was borne, and baptized the 25th of the same month by Mr. Hoyle, Curate.' *Basingstoke Parish Register*. Quoted from Baigent and Millard's *History of Basingstoke*, 1889, p. 649.

²⁰Wooll, *Op. cit.* p. 10.

²¹*Ibid.* p. 9.

²²1673. In *A Catalogue of books, (being the libraries of . . . Thomas Warton, . . . and others) to be sold by Thos. Payne*, London, 1801, this volume is listed with the note, 'MS. notes by T. W.'

²³1729. *Ibid.*

both full of manuscript notes²⁴ in Warton's crabbed hand, were part of the father's library which passed into the son's hands. Fenton's edition, at least, is known to have belonged to Warton very soon after he had gone to Oxford.²⁵ As an evidence of the strength of the boy's passion for reading it was related of him that he used to withdraw with his books from the family group at the fire-side, even in the excessively cold winter of 1739 and 1740—he was then but eleven years old—in order to devote himself uninterruptedly to his reading.²⁶

Warton's first poetical attempt was in the nature of a voluntary school exercise, a translation from Martial, *On Leander's swimming over the Hellespont to Hero*, which he sent in a letter to his sister. Fortunately this evidence of the precocity of a boy of nine was preserved, though it is probably no great misfortune that other early poetical attempts have been lost. The lines, not bad for a child, are in the prevailing stilted diction of the day,—

When bold Leander sought his distant Fair,
(Nor could the sea a braver burthen bear)
Thus to the swelling waves he spoke his woe,
Drown me on my return,—but spare me, as I go.²⁷

The letter in which it was sent bears evidence, too, of the love for music which was characteristic of Warton; 'It will be my utmost ambition,' wrote the boy, 'to make some verses, that you can set to your harpsichord.'

Warton's boyhood days seem not to have been entirely filled, however, with study. There is every reason to believe that his romantic interest in the past, his fondness for the scenes of stirring events and the varied life of earlier days was kindled at a very early age by familiarity with historic places, not only in the immediate vicinity of Basingstoke—the ruined Chapel of the Holy Ghost in the village itself, adjacent to the grammar school, the scanty ruins of Basing House a few miles away near the scene of a battle between the Saxons and the Danes, Odiham Castle, where King David of Scotland was imprisoned after the battle of Neville's Cross,—but also by excursions with his father and brother to more distant places of interest. It seems quite likely that Salisbury Plain and Stonehenge, whose mystery deeply interested Warton,²⁸ were visited, and it is certain that the brothers were taken by their father to see Windsor Castle. Of this visit it was

²⁴These notes were first incorporated in the *Observations on the Faerie Queen*, and later amplified into an edition of the minor poems.

²⁵Mant, *Op. cit.*, p. xxviii.

²⁶*Ibid.*, p. xi.

²⁷Letter to Jane Warton, November 7, 1737. *Ibid.*, p. xii.

²⁸Stonehenge was the subject of a sonnet published in the collected edition of Warton's poems in 1777.

related that while the father and the older brother were examining every detail with eager and voluble attention, the younger observed what he saw with so quiet a regard that his father misconstrued his silence as lack of interest and remarked to Joseph, 'Thomas goes on, and takes no notice of any thing he has seen.' Joseph, however, came later to realize how deeply impressed with everything he saw the younger boy had been, and remarked, 'I believe my brother was more struck with what he saw, and took more notice of every object, than either of us.'²⁹ The effect of this visit and similar experiences in his early youth probably made a profounder impression than even Joseph realized; to them was partly due, no doubt, Thomas's love of Gothic architecture and old ruins. In a reflection upon Milton he probably described his own youthful experience; 'Impressions made in earliest youth are ever afterwards most sensibly felt. Milton was probably first affected with, and often indulged the pensive pleasure which the awful solemnity of a Gothic church conveys to the mind, . . . while he was a school-boy at St. Paul's'.³⁰

In March, 1744, when Thomas had reached the age of sixteen, he was sent to Oxford,³¹ the city of 'dreaming spires and droning dons,' where he spent the remainder and by far the greater part of his life. At the same time Joseph had just taken his first degree and entered holy orders, becoming his father's curate. It is evident from the father's letters at this time that the expense of maintaining his sons at the university was a considerable drain upon the slender resources of the country vicar, who was, however, eager that his sons should have every opportunity within his means to develop their talents and put them in the way of securing honourable preferment in the church. It must have been then a great relief that Thomas was elected one of the twelve scholars of Trinity College in the following year, especially since his father died soon after, leaving a few debts and no resources except his poems. But Joseph hit upon the plan of publishing the latter by subscription, depending upon the large circle of his father's acquaintance to ensure their sale, and wrote to his brother, 'Do not doubt of being able to get some money this winter; if ever I have a groat, you may depend upon having twopence.'³²

At Oxford Thomas Warton found a place at once congenial to his aesthetic and poetical tastes and an atmosphere conducive to the classical and antiquarian studies of which he was already fond. With habits of study already formed and with an eager thirst for knowledge

²⁹Mant, *Op. cit.*, p. xxix.

³⁰*Observations on the Faerie Queene*, ed. 1807, II, p. 140.

³¹Foster: *Alumni Oxonienses, 1715-1886*. 4 vols. Oxford, 1891. IV, p. 1505.

³²Oct. 29. 1746. Wooll, *Op. cit.*, p. 215.

he was at most only momentarily or rarely distracted from his studies by the universal tendency to idleness and dissipation which prevailed at Oxford throughout the eighteenth century. Warton himself had exactly that sort of 'quick sensibility and ingenuous disposition,' that vivid sense of the reality of the past, which, he said, was able to evoke and create 'the inspiring deity,' the 'GENIUS of the place,' at the reflection that he was 'placed under those venerable walls, where a HOOKER and a HAMMOND, a BACON and a NEWTON, once pursued the same course of science, and from whence they soared to the most elevated heights of literary fame.' He was able to feel 'that incitement which Tully, according to his own testimony, experienced at Athens, when he contemplated the porticos where Socrates sat, and the laurel-groves where Plato disputed.'³³ Warton found in this emotional stimulus a substitute for the intellectual vigour that was unquestionably lacking at Oxford during the eighteenth century. Nothing more reveals the man than the nature of his reaction to the life of the University.

Testimony as to the intellectual stagnation at Oxford virtually throughout the whole eighteenth century is almost unanimous. The torpor into which the Church of England had sunk early in the century was shared by the University. The old spell of tradition and reverence for church authority was losing its potency, but without as yet being supplanted by any very vigorous and general spirit of reform. With the theological apathy that had fallen upon the universities was joined the curse of formalism and obsolete methods in education. The life of the university was expended too largely in political factions, in Jacobite sympathies, or in petty disputes over fellowships and preferments. The professors seem to have ceased to demand regular attendance at lectures which they seldom delivered, and the interests of the fellows were distracted between their fellowships and their benefices.

West wrote to Gray from Christ Church as from a 'strange country, inhabited by things that call themselves doctors and masters of arts; a country flowing with syllogisms and ale, where Horace and Virgil are equally unknown.'³⁴ Even more emphatically Gibbon lamented the fourteen months he had spent at Magdalen College as the most idle and unprofitable of his whole life,³⁵ and testified that he was 'never summoned to attend even the ceremony of a lecture; and, excepting one voluntary visit to his rooms, during the eight months of his

³³*Idler*, no. 33, by Thomas Warton. Johnson's *Works*, Lynam ed. 1825. II, p. 484.

³⁴Letter to Gray, November 14, 1735.

³⁵*Memoirs of my Life and Writings, Miscellaneous Works*. 5 vols. London, 1814, I, p. 47.

titular office, the tutor and pupil lived in the same college as strangers to each other.'³⁶ The company of the fellows he found no more stimulating. 'From the toil of reading, or thinking, or writing, they had absolved their conscience;' and instead of the 'questions of literature' which he expected them to discuss, 'their conversation stagnated in a round of college business, Tory politics, personal anecdotes, and private scandal: their dull and deep potations excused the brisk intemperance of youth.'³⁷

For clever satirical descriptions of the abuse of academic privilege which was almost universal at Oxford we are indebted to Warton himself, who was, however, not averse to profiting by the leisure which the universal neglect of college exercises gave him for his own pursuits, and who doubtless enjoyed many an undignified frolic with his fellows. He has drawn two spirited pictures of the usual college fellow, for which only too many of his colleagues might have sat. The first, in the *Progress of Discontent*, recounts the history of a collegian from the time—

When now mature in classic knowledge,
The joyful youth is sent to college,

and his father,—

At Oxford bred—in Anna's reign,

bespeaks a scholarship:—

'Sir, I'm a Glo'stershire divine,
And this my eldest son of nine;
My wife's ambition and my own
Was that this child should wear a gown.'

.
Our pupil's hopes, tho' twice defeated,
Are with a scholarship completed:
A scholarship but half maintains,
And college-rules are heavy chains:
In garret dark he smokes and puns,
A prey to discipline and duns;
And now, intent on new designs,
Sighs for a fellowship—and fines.

That prize attained at length, he covets a benefice, and marries, only, at last, to long for the joys of his Oxford days again—

'When calm around the common room
I puff'd my daily pipe's perfume!
Rode for a stomach, and inspected,
At annual bottlings, corks selected:
And din'd untax'd, untroubled, under
The portrait of our pious Founder!'

³⁶*Ibid.*, p. 53.

³⁷*Ibid.*, p. 53.

The other, the very amusing *Journal of a Senior Fellow, or Genuine Idler*, contributed to Johnson's *Idler*,²⁸ was undoubtedly drawn from the life and portrays the trivial employments of a majority of college fellows, and their absolute waste of academic leisure.

Monday, Nine o'Clock. Turned off my bed-maker for waking me at eight. Weather rainy. Consulted my weather-glass. No hopes of a ride before dinner.

Ditto, Ten. After breakfast, transcribed half a sermon from Dr. *Hickman*. *N. B.* Never to transcribe any more from *Calamy*; Mrs. *Pilcocks*, at my curacy, having one volume of that author lying in her parlour window.

Ditto, Eleven. Went down into my cellar. *Mem.* My *Mountain* will be fit to drink in a month's time. *N. B.* To remove the five-year-old port into the new bin on the left hand.

Ditto, Twelve. Mended a pen. Looked at my weather-glass again. Quick-silver very low. Shaved. Barber's hand shakes.

Ditto, One. Dined alone in my room on a soal. *N. B.* The shrimp-sauce not so good as Mr. *H.* of *Peterhouse* and I used to eat in *London* last winter, at the *Mitre* in *Fleet-street*. Sat down to a pint of *Madeira*. Mr. *H.* surprised me over it. We finished two bottles of port together, and were very cheerful. *Mem.* To dine with Mr. *H.* at *Peterhouse* next *Wednesday*. One of the dishes a leg of pork and peas, by my desire.

Ditto, Six. Newspaper in the common room.

Ditto, Seven. Returned to my room. Made a tiff of warm punch, and to bed before nine; did not fall asleep till ten, a young fellow-commoner being very noisy over my head.

Tuesday, Nine. Rose squeamish. A fine morning. Weather-glass very high.

Ditto, Ten. Ordered my horse, and rode to the five-mile stone on the *Newmarket* road. Appetite gets better. A pack of hounds in full cry crossed the road, and startled my horse.

Ditto, Twelve. Dressed. Found a letter on my table to be in *London* the 19th inst. Bespoke a new wig.

Ditto, One. At dinner in the hall. Too much water in the soup. Dr. *Dry* always orders the beef to be salted too much for me.

Ditto, Two. In the common-room. Dr. *Dry* gave us an instance of a gentleman who kept the gout out of his stomach by drinking old *Madeira*. Conversation chiefly on the expeditions. Company broke up at four. Dr. *Dry* and myself played at back-gammon for a brace of snipes. Won.

Ditto, Five. At the coffee-house. Met Mr. *H.* there. Could not get a sight of the *Monitor*.

Ditto, Seven. Returned home, and stirred my fire. Went to the common-room, and supped on the snipes with Dr. *Dry*.

Ditto, Eight. Began the evening in the common-room. Dr. *Dry* told several stories. Were very merry. Our new fellow, that studies physics, very talkative toward twelve. Pretends he will bring the youngest Miss _____ to drink tea with me soon. Impertinent blockhead! etc.²⁹

²⁸December 2, 1758. No. 33.

²⁹Chalmers: *The British Essayists*; etc. London 1808, vol. XXXIII, p. 112.

The undergraduates' indifference to everything but pleasure, the inevitable result of the self-indulgence of their superiors, came in for its share of ridicule in the *Companion to the Guide, and Guide to the Companion*,⁴⁰ a satire on Oxford guide-books and antiquarian studies as well as a humorous exposure of university abuses. Here Warton professed to describe a number of residence halls previously over-looked, 'in other words Inns, or Tippling Houses; or, as our colleges are at present, *Places of Entertainment*,' the 'Libraries founded in our *Coffee-Houses*, for the benefit of such of the Academics as have neglected, or lost, their Latin and Greek,' in which the Magazines, Reviews, Novels, Occasional Poems, and Political Pamphlets were supplied. And, 'as there are here Books suited to every Taste, so there are Liquors adapted to every species of reading,' for Politics, coffee, for Divinity, Port, and so on. Then there were a number of schools not commonly included in the guide-books: among them 'three spacious and superb Edifices, situated to the southward of the High-Street, 100 feet long, by 30 in breadth, vulgarly called *Tennis Courts*, where *Exercise* is regularly performed both morning and afternoon. Add to these, certain Schools familiarly denominated *Billiard Tables*, where the *Laws of Motion* are exemplified, and which may be considered as a necessary Supplement to our Courses of Experimental Philosophy. Nor must we omit the many *Nine-pin* and *Skittle-Alleys*, open and dry, for the instruction of Scholars in Geometrical Knowledge, and particularly, for proving the *centripetal* principle.' Among public edifices he solemnly noted the stocks, the town-pump and 'PENNYLESS BENCH a Place properly dedicated to the MUSES, [where] History and Tradition, report, that many eminent Poets have been *Benchers*,'⁴¹ enumerating among them Phillips and the author of the *Panegyric on Oxford Ale*.

Although Oxford was perhaps no longer a power in the intellectual world, it was still one of the few places in England where there were any considerable libraries or facilities for study, and there was always there a little group of devoted scholars and serious men who used the abundant leisure afforded by the laxity of college discipline for individual research and study. A few such names redeemed the dishonour of Oxford during the eighteenth century. There have always been at Oxford a few scholars who were genuinely devoted to the classics. There were others whose interests centered in literary and historical antiquities, but who, because of the general contempt for such subjects and their own inability either to command respect for their work or to divert their interest to more immediately useful channels, fell under a certain obloquy as 'mere Antiquarians.' But however small were the

⁴⁰1760?

⁴¹Quotations from the second edition, London (1762?).

results of their laborious studies, they kept alive and transmitted to their successors in more favourable days an ardent interest in scholarship. Hickes actually made the study of Anglo-Saxon somewhat the rage among this class of students at Oxford at the beginning of the century, and his influence was perpetuated in the founding of the Rawlinson professorship by a member of his College (St. John's) about the middle of the century, an endowment which became effectual at its close when Anglo-Saxon scholarship was coming into its own. Trinity College, too, had its antiquarian tradition, best represented by John Aubrey, who contributed his manuscript *Minutes of Lives* to Anthony à Wood's *Antiquities of Oxford*; Thomas Coxeter, an industrious collector of old English plays, who was still living when Thomas Warton went up to Trinity and from whom he must have gained what was more valuable than notes for his *History of English Poetry*, access to his collection of plays; and Francis Wise, the archeologist and under keeper of the Bodleian, at whose home at Ellsfield Warton was a frequent and welcome guest, and who helped him with his *Life of Bathurst*. In this connection Robert Lowth, bishop of London, poetry professor when Warton went to Oxford and one of the most distinguished Oxford men of the eighteenth century, cannot be overlooked. Warton gave him some slight assistance with his life of Wykeham,⁴² and perhaps received from him the suggestion for his lives of the founder and a president of his college, Sir Thomas Pope and Ralph Bathurst.

Such was the state of Oxford when Warton matriculated in 1744; such it practically remained during the forty-seven years he lived there. And no one was more keenly alive than he to all its possibilities of pleasure and profit. Although most of his life was passed within the boundaries of college walls, of the 'High,' the 'Broad,' and the 'Corn,' of Cherwell and Isis and the adjacent parks and water-walks, he was master of every inch of that domain and was equally at home in his own common-room and 'Captain Jolly's,' among his fellow dons and the watermen along the river. He found at Oxford many other charms besides a favourable place to study, with ample leisure, and in an atmosphere permeated with the spirit of centuries of learning. It was to him the source of keen æsthetic pleasure. With appreciative eyes he viewed the Thames and Cherwell with their 'willow-fringed banks,' the charming water-walks bordered with fine old trees whose protruding roots and mossy trunks afforded many a delightful place to read, while the gently-rolling meadows beyond invited to morning rambles when the fields were purpling under the rising sun and the birds were beginning their songs.⁴³ These he may well have preferred to the more arti-

⁴²Letter from Lowth to Warton, Oct. 20, 1757. Wooll, Op. cit., pp. 249-252.

⁴³Ode, *Morning. The Author confined to College.*

ficial beauties of his own college gardens, then in their prime of eighteenth century topiary formality, with their 'walls all round cover'd with Green Yew in Pannelwork' enclosing a 'wilderness extremely delightful with variety of mazes, in which 'tis easy for a man to lose himself.' It is pretty unlikely that Warton was often tempted to sit down and study on the benches placed 'here and there in this Labyrinth;' he, at least, preferred the 'sedgy banks' of Cherwell to the 'neat Fountain with Artificial Flowers on the Surface of the Water.'⁴⁴ The real glory of the garden, then as now, must have been the beautiful avenue of lime trees to the north of the labyrinth, which had been planted thirty years before Warton came to Trinity, and whose arches and knarled boughs probably even then resembled the wood-timbered roof of a mediæval hall.

The fine old Gothic buildings of the University delighted even more. No one, perhaps, has viewed them with more enthusiastic appreciation than Thomas Warton. In an age that despised the Gothic his admiration for it grew steadily, and his taste was no doubt stimulated by the fine old gateway of Magdalen College, on which he was especially fond of gazing.⁴⁵ His *Triumph of Isis* contains a tribute to the beauties of Oxford,—

Ye fretted pinnacles, ye fanes sublime,
 Ye towers that wear the mossy vest of time;
 Ye massy piles of old munificence,
 At once the pride of learning and defence;
 Ye cloisters pale, that lengthening to the sight,
 To contemplation, step by step, invite;
 Ye high-arch'd walks, where oft the whispers clear
 Of harps unseen have swept the poet's ear;
 Ye temples dim, where quiet duty pays
 Her holy hymns of ever-echoing praise;
 Lo! your lov'd Isis, from the bordering vale,
 With all a mother's fondness bids you hail!

Especially during his first years at Oxford Warton probably did not devote himself exclusively to scholarly pursuits, but tasted the robuster pleasures and petty trials of the lighter side of Oxford life, contributing his share to an afternoon's pleasure at Wolvercote, entering with zest into games of skittles, excursions on the river by wherry, or cross-country gallops, and finishing the day's pleasures with a 'careless round in High-street' with calls at 'Jolly's for the casual draught.'⁴⁶ This aspect of his college career is reflected in his early humorous

⁴⁴J. Pointer's *Oxford Guide*, 1749, quoted by H. E. D. Blakiston, *Trinity College*, London, 1898, p. 201.

⁴⁵Mant, *Op. cit.*, p. c, quoting the *Biographical Dictionary*.

⁴⁶Warton's *Ode to a Grizzle Wig*.

academic poems with a lively realism that betrays actual experience of the joys and sorrows they describe.

My sober evening let the tankard bless,
With toast embrown'd, and fragrant nutmeg fraught,
While the rich draught with oft-repeated whiffs
Tobacco mild improves. Divine repast!
Where no crude surfeit, or intemperate joys
Of lawless Bacchus reign; but o'er my soul
A calm Lethean creeps; in drowsy trance
Each thought subsides, and sweet oblivion wraps
My peaceful brain, as if the leaden rod
Of magic Morpheus o'er mine eyes had shed
Its opiate influence. What tho' sore ills
Oppress, dire want of chill-dispelling coals
Or cheerful candle (save the make-weight's gleam
Haply remaining) heart-rejoicing ALE
Cheers the sad scene, and every want supplies.⁴⁷

Lines surely

' with honest love

Of ALE divine inspir'd, and love of song!

On the other hand the petty annoyances are no less realistically represented,—the vacant afternoons—

When tatter'd stockings ask my mending hand

Not unexperienc'd,

and 'the tedious toil Slides unregarded' comforted by draughts of 'all-pow'rful ALE;' the inevitable days of reckoning after careless joys when

. . . generous Captain JOLLY ticks no more,⁴⁸

Nor SHEPPARD, barbarous matron, longer gives

The wonted trust.⁴⁹

and

Th' un pitying Bursar's cross-affixing hand

Blasts all my joys, and stops my glad career,⁴⁹

and the invasion of his Eden by irate tradesmen,—the 'plaintive voice Of Laundress shrill,' the 'Barber spruce,' the 'Taylor with obsequious bow,' and the Groom 'with defying front And stern demeanour.'

Warton's poetical gift at times combined with his genial spirits to enliven somewhat the tedium of college life. Among the poetasters of the Bachelor's Common Room he started an amusing organization of the bachelors, which provided for the annual election, 'on Tuesday immediately after Mid-Lent Sunday,' of a 'Lady Patroness' from among the

⁴⁷*Panegyric on Oxford Ale.*

⁴⁸The Oxford Newsman's Verses, for the year 1767.

⁴⁹*Panegyric on Oxford Ale.*

Oxford 'Toasts' and a 'Poet Laureat' to sing her charms for the amusement of the other bachelors while they consumed a bottle of wine 'from their publick Stock,' and diverted themselves at the expense of their Laureate, who read his 'Verses before the Court' wearing 'a Chaplet of Laurel composed by the Common-Room Man after the manner of the Ancients.'⁵⁰ Warton himself served in the capacity of laureate for the first two years of the club's existence, but his verses to Miss Jenny Cotes and Miss Molly Wilmot have never been thought worthy of being transferred to any edition of his poems from the red-morocco-bound quarto in which they were carefully copied by the Common-Room man.⁵¹ Warton seems to have been the life of the club, and after he deserted the Bachelors' for the Fellows' Common Room, the club languished; its records became intermittent and finally ceased altogether.⁵²

In this atmosphere of mingled gaiety and work, in this environment of obvious pleasure and obscure study, Warton spent an active but uneventful life. Immediately upon taking his first degree he entered holy orders and became a tutor. Shortly after he had proceeded Master of Arts, he succeeded to a fellowship, and he remained a tutor and fellow of Trinity all his life. In this way he escaped the struggle for a livelihood which darkened the early years of some of his contemporaries. Warton knew nothing of the hard life of Grub Street nor the bitter disappointments against which his friend Dr. Johnson had contended. His academic and clerical preferments ensured him a comfortable, even a luxurious, living, congenial surroundings, libraries, and probably the most convenient facilities for literary work to be found anywhere in England, and a considerable amount of leisure to devote to his favourite pursuits. Warton seems never to have regarded himself as a professional man of letters. His first love, his first interest, was Oxford; his first loyalty, his first duty, was to her. And if he was

⁵⁰Statutes Ordered and Agreed upon by the Members of the Batchellors' Common Room. This book, in which the minutes of the club were kept, was deposited in Trinity College Library in November, 1820, and it was there that, through the kindness of Mr. Green, the present librarian, I examined the curious old book.

⁵¹They were printed in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. LXVI, p. 236.

In one of Warton's notebooks in Trinity College Library at Oxford is a bit of verse of a similar sort, called 'Extempore on a Lady with fine Eyes & bad Voice', as follows:

'Oxonia's Sons fair Arnold view
At once with Love and wonder.
She bears Jove's Lightning in her Eyes,
But in her Voice his Thunder.

Oxon. Sept. 17, 1752.'

⁵²In 1764.

somewhat remiss in his lectures, he had every encouragement to be so; and he more than once suffered his own work to languish while he devoted himself to his pupils.

It was very natural that Warton should be in a certain sense indolent. Without the spur of necessity to keep him steadily at one piece of work until it was finished, without great ambition for academic or church preferment, without the incentive of conspicuous examples of important scholarship, with abundant poetical taste, but without much creative poetical genius, with great abilities and an enthusiastic interest in a wide range of subjects, it was easy for him to drift from one subject to another, to have his energies frequently diverted into new channels. He passed with perfect ease and unabated enthusiasm from poetry to criticism, from antiquarian to classical research, from literary history to the editing of his favourite poet. And his work has all the merits of a labour of love: enthusiasm, appreciative criticism, sympathetic interpretation and thoroughness in purpose, if not always in accomplishment; it is distinguished in every field.

CHAPTER II

EARLY POETRY, PUBLISHED BEFORE 1777

Naturally enough Warton first attempted to express his genius in poetry, and the bulk though not the best of his poems were written while he was yet a young man. Then, because the age in which he lived was unfavourable to poetry, especially the new kind that he was writing, and because, as Christopher North said, 'the gods had made him poetical, but not a poet,'¹ he turned later to criticism and history where he won more immediate as well as more enduring fame. He did not, however, so completely abandon poetry as not to produce some pieces which, when compared with the work of his contemporaries, have real intrinsic value and take an important place in the development of poetry in his century. Moreover, his early verse, though largely imitative, imitates new models, the poet's favourites, Spenser and Milton, more than the pseudo-classical models, and shows a real originality in its introduction of the Gothic or mediæval subjects in which the poet was always deeply interested, in its genuine interest in nature, and in its attempts of the sonnet form. Besides this, his verse illustrates more completely than that of any one of his contemporaries the whole change that was taking place in English poetry; it includes practically every tendency of the new movement: the repudiation of the pseudo-classical models, the Spenserian and Miltonic revivals, the return to nature, the cult of solitude, the melancholy of the 'grave-yard school,' the interest in the supernatural, and the Gothic revival. Although Warton lacked the lyrical sweetness and poetic insight of his friend Collins—whose qualities he could at least appreciate—and the poetic fire and inspiration of Gray—to whom he paid the tribute of a sonnet—these are the poets with whom one feels bound to compare him. If he had less poetical genius than either of them, he had at least a greater variety of interests, and he made distinguished contributions in the direction of his principal interests.

¹*An Hour's Talk about Poetry*, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, XXX, p. 483.

Warton's first published poem,² printed without his name in his brother's thin quarto of *Odes on Various Subjects* in 1746, was, like his earlier school-boy exercise, a classical imitation. The year before it appeared, when the poet was but seventeen, he had written his first long poem, *The Pleasures of Melancholy*, and he published it anonymously in a quarto pamphlet in 1747. The poem shows how devoted a student of Milton the young poet was, the tone and diction being decidedly Miltonic although the title and the form were obviously directly suggested by Akenside's much less romantic *Pleasures of Imagination*. The poem follows the general plan of *Il Penseroso*, being a description of the various pleasures which the man devoted to melancholy contemplation may enjoy, and it is full of personifications of abstractions and Miltonic epithets and diction. A few typical passages will illustrate both Warton's command of blank verse and the influence of Milton:—the invocation,—

Mother of musings, Contemplation sage,
Whose grotto stands upon the topmost rock
Of Teneriff;

and such direct allusions as,—

. the dazzling spells
Of wily Comus cheat th' unweeting eye
With blar illusion, and persuade to drink
That charmed cup, which Reason's mintage fair
Unmoulds, and stamps the monster on the man;

and,—

The taper'd choir, at the late hour of pray'r,
Oft let me tread, while to th' according voice
The many-sounding organ peals on high,
The clear slow-dittied chaunt, or varied hymn,
Till all my soul is bath'd in ecstasies,
And lapp'd in Paradise.³

The whole poem is saturated too with the melancholy of the graveyard school of poets, and passages can be selected which seem to have been directly inspired by various of their poems. The young poet gives every evidence of having tried his hand in the style of each of them; but he combined the results into a whole with some characteristic addi-

²*To a Fountain. Imitated from Horace, Ode XIII, Book III, p. 32 in Warton's Odes.*

A small collection of poems, *Five Pastoral Eclogues*, which was published anonymously in 1745 and subsequently in Pearch's *Continuation of Dodsley's Collection*, has been attributed to Warton, but probably erroneously. At least he never acknowledged them, and his sister assured Bishop Mant that he positively disclaimed them. Mant, *Op. cit.*, p. xiv.

³*Cf. Il Penseroso, lines 161-6.*

tions of his own. Among the lines that show Warton's debt to the early poets of the melancholy school the following are obviously imitations of Parnell and Young,—

But when the world
Is clad in Midnight's raven-colour'd robe,
'Mid hollow charnel let me watch the flame
Of taper dim, shedding a livid glare
O'er the wan heaps; while airy voices talk
Along the glimm'ring walls; or ghostly shape
At distance seen, invites with beck'ning hand
My lonesome steps, thro' the far-winding vaults.
Nor undelightful is the solemn noon
Of night, when haply wakeful from my couch
I start: lo, all is motionless around!
Roars not the rushing wind; the sons of men
And every beast in mute oblivion lie;
All nature's hush'd in silence and in sleep.
O then how fearful is it to reflect,
That thro' the still globe's awful solitude,
No being wakes but me!

The description of 'fall'n Persepolis' was surely written with Dyer's *Ruins of Rome* fresh in memory,—

Here columns heap'd on prostrate columns, torn
From their firm base, increase the mould'ring mass.
Far as the sight can pierce, appear the spoils
Of sunk magnificence! a blended scene
Of moles, fanes, arches, domes and palaces,
Where, with his brother Horror, Ruin sits.

The description of the morning rain-storm, no doubt suggested by Thomson and not without echoes of Spenser, bears at the same time unmistakable evidence of Warton's close observation of rural scenes and his ability to portray them in simple but clear outlines,—

Yet not ungrateful is the morn's approach,
When dropping wet she comes, and clad in clouds,
While thro' the damp air scowls the louring south,
Blackening the landscape's face, that grove and hill
In formless vapours undistinguish'd swim;
Th' afflicted songsters of the sadden'd groves
Hail not the sullen gloom; the waving elms
That, hoar thro' time, and rang'd in thick array,
Enclose with stately row some rural hall,
Are mute, nor echo with the clamors hoarse
Of rooks rejoicing on their airy boughs;
While to the shed the dripping poultry crowd,
A mournful train: secure the village-hind
Hangs o'er the crackling blaze, nor tempts the storm;
Fix'd in th' unfinish'd furrow rests the plough.

This choice of models was not accidental even from the first; it was part of a consistent and deliberate reaction against the prevailing models and a rejection of them. His preference for Spenser rather than Pope Warton stated expressly in this first long poem and defended on the very 'romantic' ground that livelier imagination and warmer passion are aroused by the artless magic of the *Faerie Queene* than by the artificial brilliancy of the *Rape of the Lock*,—

Thro' POPE'S soft song tho' all the Graces breathe,
And happiest art adorn his Attic page;
Yet does my mind with sweeter transport glow,
As at the root of mossy trunk reclin'd,
In magic SPENSER'S wildly warbled song
I see deserted Una wander wide
Thro' wasteful solitudes, and lurid heaths,
Weary, forlorn; than when the fated fair
Upon the bosom bright of silver Thames
Launches in all the lustre of brocade,
Amid the splendors of the laughing Sun.
The gay description palls upon the sense,
And coldly strikes the mind with feeble bliss.⁴

Warton's relation to the melancholy group of poets who drew their inspiration largely from *Il Penseroso* is, moreover, not that of a mere imitator. He made positive contributions to that style of poetry by contriving to preserve a more objective tone in his own melancholy and by introducing the Gothic note⁵ that later frequently became dominant in his own verse and constituted his distinctive contribution to poetry. Of even greater importance is the fact that he may fairly be credited with having influenced pretty directly the greatest poem of the elegiac school, Gray's *Elegy in a Country Church-yard*. The following passage gives the setting for Gray's poem too clearly for the similarity to be dismissed as altogether accidental,—

Beneath yon ruin'd abbey's moss-grown piles
Oft let me sit, at twilight hour of eve,
Where thro' some western window the pale moon
Pours her long-levell'd rule of streaming light;
While sullen sacred silence reigns around,

⁴This brief but happy comparison of Pope's verse with Spenser's expresses the same idea that was given fuller discussion nearly ten years later by the poet's brother in his revolutionary *Essay on Pope*, 1756.

⁵The poem also gives evidence of Warton's interest in native mythology: 'Contemplation' is represented as having been found by a Druid

Far in a hollow glade of Mona's woods,
and carried to the 'close shelter of his oaken bow'r' where she
. . . . lov'd to lie

Oft deeply list'ning to the rapid roar
Of wood-hung Meinai, stream of Druids old.

Save the lone schreech-owl's note, who builds his bow'r
 Amid the mould'ring caverns dark and damp,
 Or the calm breeze, that rustles in the leaves
 Of flaunting ivy, that with mantle green
 Invests some wasted tow'r.

The additional fact that Gray took up again in the winter of 1749—two years after *The Pleasures of Melancholy* was published—the poem he had begun several years earlier⁶ increases the likelihood that Warton's poem prompted and influenced the completion of his own:—

Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,
 And all the air a solemn stillness holds,

Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tow'r
 The moeping owl does to the moon complain
 Of such as, wand'ring near her secret bow'r,
 Molest her ancient solitary reign.

Warton's devotion to his Alma Mater inspired the *Triumph of Isis*, in 1749, the first poem to attract the attention of the academic world. The year before, William Mason, in *Isis: an Elegy*, had glanced at the Jacobite leanings of Oxford as they had given rise to a foolish drunken out-break which had been carried to the King's bench and had reflected dishonour upon the heads of some of the colleges. Warton, encouraged by Dr. Huddesford, the president of Trinity, hastened to the defense of his university in a poem that at least surpassed Mason's. The youthful poet received a substantial compliment from Dr. King, whom he had especially commended, and who left five guineas with Daniel Prince, the bookseller, to be given to the author. The *Triumph of Isis* is not one of Warton's best poems. It is largely pseudo-classical in its use of the heroic couplet, its artificial diction,—such as 'vernal bloom,' 'oliv'd portal,' 'pearly grot,' 'floating pile,' 'dalliance with the tuneful Nine,'—and in its stereotyped classical allusions. It is full of Miltonic personifications of abstractions and places mingled with the deities and heroes of classical myth and history; we meet with Freedom and Gratulation, Cam and Isis, Muse and Naiad, Tully, Cato and Eurus. But there is quite as much mediæval colouring. Warton's characteristic love of the past appears in one of the finest passages in the poem in which his admiration for Gothic architecture is only second to his love of Oxford.⁷

Following the appearance of these poems Warton was asked to contribute to the *Student, or, the Oxford, and Cambridge Monthly Miscellany*, and brought out four poems of earlier composition which were

⁶See Gray's *Works*, ed. Gosse, I, p. 72.

⁷Quoted p. 20.

printed over various signatures.⁹ One, *Morning. The Author confined to College*, in six line stanzas, shows some influence of Milton and a personal enjoyment of natural scenes, and one is a paraphrase of Job XXXIX in heavy couplets, unlike any other of Warton's verse. Two of the poems were humorous academic verse, experiments in satire and burlesque in the taste of the Augustans. The earliest of them, the *Progress of Discontent*,⁹ written in 1746, was considered by the poet's brother, who may not have been an impartial critic, the best imitation of Swift that had ever appeared.¹⁰ It is a mild satire upon the career of many a young man who, with discontented indolence rather than ambition, sought advancement through the university and church, and the story is told in vigorous Hudibrastic measure with considerable relish and spirit. The *Panegyric on Oxford Ale*¹¹ is probably the best of his humorous academic pieces. It is a burlesque of Milton's epic style after the manner of Phillips's *Splendid Shilling*. The blank verse is well managed, and the mock dignified humour well kept up throughout the poem. The models are unmistakable; there are direct allusions to both, and the poem concludes with comparing the unhappiness of the poet whose supply of ale is cut off with that of Adam shut out from Paradise,—a grief he professed to share in common with his master, the author of the *Splendid Shilling*,—

Thus ADAM, exil'd from the beauteous scenes
Of Eden, griev'd, no more in fragrant bow'r
On fruits divine to feast, fresh shade and vale
No more to visit, or vine-mantled grot;

Thus too the matchless bard, whose lay resounds
The SPLENDID SHILLING'S praise, in nightly gloom
Of lonesome garret, pin'd for cheerful ALE;
Whose steps in verse Miltonic I pursue,
Mean follower: like him with honest love
Of ALE divine inspir'd, and love of song.
But long may bounteous Heav'n with watchful care
Avert his hapless lot! Enough for me

⁹*A Panegyrick on Ale*, signed T. W. x. y. z., p. 65-8; *Morning. An Ode*, signed J. J. Trin. Coll. Cambridge, p. 234-5; *The Progress of Discontent*, signed T. W. x. y. z., p. 235-8; *Job, Chapter XXXIX*, signed Θ, p. 278-9. Oxford, 1750, vol. I.

¹⁰The poem was founded on a Latin exercise which was commended by Dr. Huddesford, and at his request thus paraphrased in English. Mant, Op. cit., II, p. 192.

¹¹J. Warton's edition of Pope, 9 vols. London, 1797, II, p. 302.

¹²Quoted above p. 21.

That burning with congenial flame I dar'd
 His guiding steps at distance to pursue,
 And sing his favorite theme in kindred strains.

In the same year Warton made two other modest offerings, both of slight importance. *Newmarket, a Satire*, published anonymously, was a somewhat heavy Popeian satire in closed couplets with balance, antithesis, and not infrequent epigrammatic turns of thought. Another pamphlet contained an academic poem, an *Ode for Music*, written for the anniversary in commemoration of the benefactors to the university, and performed at the Sheldonian Theatre, July 2, 1751.

In all these attempts the poet was evidently trying to find both himself and his public. That he felt the need of winning an audience for poetry which was deliberately different from the prevailing fashion is shown by the fact that much of it was published anonymously and that in his next publication, to which he did not affix his name,—*The Union: or Select Scots and English Poems*, containing some of his brother's odes, Collins's *Ode to Evening*, and Gray's *Elegy*, a few ancient Scottish poems, and minor poems by some of his contemporaries,—he asked for the verdict of the public upon two new poems of his own which he included without owning them.¹² In his preface, as in the table of contents, he ascribed them to 'a late member of the University of Aberdeen, whose modesty would not permit us to print his name,' and he further drew them and their author to public attention by adding, 'from these ingenious essays, the public may be enabled to form some judgment beforehand of a poem of a nobler and more important nature which he is now preparing.' Since it was Warton's life-long practice to announce in his various publications work which he had then in hand or intended soon to publish, there is no reason for supposing that he did not at the time actually intend to write a serious and extended poem of some kind, with which the favour of the public did not encourage him to proceed.

Of the two poems thus modestly proffered, the *Pastoral in the Manner of Spenser* was patently inspired by the poet whose work Warton was then studying carefully both as poet and critic, and the *Ode on the Approach of Summer* was obviously Miltonic. The former is a double imitation, a paraphrase of the 20th *Idyllium* of Theocritus in the manner of Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar* with pseudo-Spenserian diction. But like other eighteenth century imitators of Spenser—of whom, it will be remembered, his father was perhaps the first—Warton had not enough knowledge of Spenser's language to escape such solecisms as 'did deemen', nor could his admiration save him.

Some passages of the *Ode* are little more than rearrangements of

¹²His verses *Inscribed On a Beautiful Grotto near the Water* were also included, but without his name.

Milton's thought and even diction, although it is noticeable that Warton was somewhat truer to the spirit of his model than many of Milton's imitators; his melancholy is not so obtrusive as theirs, and he retains much of Milton's genuine classicism, with which he was in close sympathy. All of these points are illustrated by the following passage, selected almost at random,—

Or bear me to yon antique wood,
Dim temple of sage Solitude!
There within a nook most dark,
Where none my musing mood may mark,
Let me in many a whisper'd rite
The Genius old of Greece invite,
With that fair wreath my brows to bind,
Which for his chosen imps he twin'd,
Well nurtur'd in Pierian lore,
On clear Illissus' laureate shore.

Warton was, however, more interested in the mysteries of native superstition than in Grecian rites. Stirred by reading Spenser and old romances, he sighed for 'more romantic scenes,' for the

... fairy bank, or magic lawn,
By Spenser's lavish pencil drawn:
Or bow'r in Vallombrosa's shade,
By legendary pens pourtray'd.

He longed to visit

The rugged vaults, and riven tow'rs
Of that proud castle's painted bow'rs,
Whence HARDYKNUTE, a baron bold,
In Scotland's martial days of old,
Descended from the stately feast,
Begirt with many a warrior guest,
To quell the pride of Norway's king,
With quiv'ring lance and twanging string.

And when he continued,—

Might I that holy legend find,
By fairies spelt in mystic rhymes,
To teach enquiring later times,
What open force, or secret guile,
Dash'd into dust the solemn pile,

he had passed from the influence of Milton and Spenser into his own best-loved poetical province, the glories of the Gothic past.

This most representative of Warton's earliest poems contains also what appears to be his poetical program. It has been said before that the preface to the collection in which these poems appeared had hinted at a longer poem by the same author soon to be published should these

meet with favour; the *Ode* suggests what the nature of that 'nobler and more important' poem might have been. The prophecy of his most striking contribution to the new movement in poetry, the poetical embodiment of the past, begun even in his early work, appears in a passage near the close of the poem where the poet, ensconced in his ideal retreat, promises to dedicate his days to poetry, poetry which shall celebrate England's glorious past,—

Nor let me fail, meantime, to raise
The solemn song to Britain's praise:
To spurn the shepherd's simple reeds,
And paint heroic ancient deeds:
To chant fam'd ARTHUR'S magic tale,
And EDWARD, stern in sable mail;
Or wand'ring BRUTUS' lawless doom,
Or brave BONDUCA, scourge of Rome.

These are the themes we find constantly recurring through Warton's poetry, finding their best expression later in the odes *On the Grave of King Arthur* and *The Crusade*.

That Warton was not simply an imitative poet was steadily proved by each new poem, and by none more strikingly than by two sonnets published in 1755 in Dodsley's *Collection*.¹³ He was a constant experimenter with forms as well as subjects of poetry. It may have been—pretty certainly was—his admiration for Milton again that interested him in the sonnet, but the subjects of his sonnets are not only so un-Miltonic but so original in their use of the form to express personal emotion in the presence of natural scenes as to show him a real and important innovator. Warton was not, however, the first eighteenth century poet to write sonnets; Mason, Stillingfleet, and Edwards had each written a few, so that the whole credit for its revival cannot be claimed for any one of them.¹⁴ But certainly Warton's greater impor-

¹³Vol. IV, p. 221-2.

¹⁴Mason has a sonnet written before 1748, according to his own somewhat loose statement, but not published until 1797. See Mason's *Works*, ed. 1811, I, p. 121.

Edwards wrote fifty. (See Phelps's *Romantic Movement*, p. 45-6). Thirteen were published in volume II of Dodsley's *Collection*, 1748 (2nd ed.) in which Warton's first two sonnets were published, vol. IV, (ed. 1755). See my note in *Mod. Lang. Notes*, XXX, p. 232.

Some of Stillingfleet's sonnets were certainly written before 1750. Phelps, as above.

Gray's *Sonnet on the Death of West* has an even earlier date, 1742, but it was not published until after his death.

See also E. P. Morton's list of fifty sonnets before 1750 in *Mod. Lang. Notes*, XX, p. 97-8, *The English Sonnet*, (1658-1750), which does not include Mason's first sonnet.

tance as a man of letters and the superior merit and originality of theme of his sonnets make his influence greater in the revival of the sonnet than that of any of his predecessors.

The *Sonnet Written at Winslade in Hampshire* 'about 1750' is the better of the two. It is not free from the influence of Miltonic diction—though not the diction of the sonnets; it is distinctly personal and reflective in tone, and further it indicates Warton's feeling that in their poetical inspiration the native charms of the village were peculiarly adapted to his genius. It shows that his interest in natural scenes as the source of poetic emotion was as conscious and deliberate in his early verse as his interest in the past for the same purpose,—

Her fairest landships whence my Muse has drawn,
Too free with servile courtly phrase to fawn,
Too weak to try the buskin's stately strain.

The *Sonnet on Bathing*¹⁵ is likewise Miltonic in diction, but it wholly lacks the personal note that distinguishes the other. Both are written in the Miltonic form, with better rhymes than some of his later sonnets.

The important long poem promised in the preface to the *Union* never appeared. The poet was not only not sufficiently encouraged by the reception of his poems in that collection, but so far discouraged as to publish no more serious poems until after his fame as the critic of Spenser and historian of English poetry made them sure of a favourable hearing, perhaps, too, until his critical work had somewhat won the taste of his age to the new sort of poetry. He made, however, one further venture in the humorous vein which had always a certain vogue. In 1764 he was the unconfessed editor of a miscellany of humorous verse called *The Oxford Sausage; or, Select Poetical Pieces: Written by the Most Celebrated Wits of the University of Oxford*. His own earlier academic verse with several new pieces of inferior merit were included in this miscellany with a great many similar poems by his contemporaries. The preface, in mock-serious style, explained the purpose and praised the novelty of such a collection and poked slyly at the growing fondness for poring over manuscript collections: 'That nothing might escape us, we have even examined the indefatigable Dr. Rawlinson's voluminous collection of manuscripts presented to the Bodleian Library, but, we must acknowledge, without success; as not one poignant ingredient was to be found in all that immense heap of rare and invaluable originals.'¹⁶ Of the two poems little need be said. The not very amusing dialogue between the *Phaeton* and the *One-Horse Chair* is, apparently,

¹⁵This sonnet was the only one of Warton's included by Coleridge in his privately-printed pamphlet containing twenty-eight 'Sonnets from various Authors', to be bound up with those of Bowles.

¹⁶Preface, p. vi, ed. 1821, Oxford.

as a reviewer in the *Monthly Review*¹⁷ observed, an imitation of Smart's fable of the *Bag-Wig and Tobacco-Pipe*. More clever is the little *Ode to a Grizzle Wig* in which Warton, while comparing the relative merits of 'bob' and 'grizzle', frequently burlesqued with relish the manner of Milton's shorter poems. These poems and the *Oxford News-man's Verses* were evidently dashed off with more enjoyment of the fun than poetry, and their chief interest lies in the fact that they show the poet in his most robust and genial mood.

The most interesting of the new Warton poems, however, is not by Thomas Warton, but by his brother Joseph, the *Epistle from Thomas Hearne, Antiquary, to the Author of the Companion to the Oxford Guide*,¹⁸ which on the authority of Mant¹⁹ has been pretty generally accepted as written by Thomas Warton.²⁰ But surely there are many who are loath to believe that Warton directed this clever squib at himself, when the author of the *Companion* and the editor of the *Sausage* were so generally guessed to be the same, and who are glad to find among Joseph Warton's letters a letter to Thomas in which he calls it his own.²¹ The poet addressed Warton as—

Friend of the moss-grown spire and crumbling arch,
and concluded with a curse upon his antiquarian studies—

. may curses every search attend

That seems inviting! May'st thou pore in vain

For dubious door-ways! May revengeful moths

Thy ledgers eat. May chronologic spouts

Retain no cypher legible! May crypts

Lurk undiscern'd! Nor may'st thou spell the names

Of saints in storied windows! Nor the dates

Of bells discover! Nor the genuine site

Of Abbots' pantries! And may Godstowe veil,

Deep from thy eyes profane, her Gothic charms!

Warton's apparent abandonment of poetry at the very moment when he seems to have been passing from poetry largely imitative to poetry with considerable originality and intrinsic value demands some explanation. The reasons for Warton's partial desertion of poetry and turn to critical and historical studies are in part the same. It is generally recognized that the eighteenth century was conspicuously an age of prose, of reason, of skepticism, of didacticism; its characteristic poetry was either prosaic or merely brilliant and correct; and its attitude

¹⁷XCI, p. 275.

¹⁸*A Companion to the Guide, and a Guide to the Companion*, London (1760).

¹⁹Who included it in his edition of Warton's poems, II, p. 189.

²⁰It is quoted among Warton's antiquarian pieces by Professor Beers in *English Romanticism in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 201-2.

²¹Letter of July 5, 1769, Wooll, Op. cit., p. 348.

toward imagination, enthusiasm, romance, decidedly hostile. It was not the age to encourage such a poet as Thomas Warton with his enthusiastic love of the older neglected poets and his fondness for romance, nor to be moved by descriptions of the glories of the past. The standards and ideals of the school of Pope were not yet overthrown,—Warton himself did not immediately escape from their influence in his own poetry,—and there probably were few who read his verse with sympathetic appreciation. And Warton's poetical genius was not sufficiently robust to weather the storms of unfavourable criticism. Later in his life his sensitiveness to ridicule of his poetry—he could endure with composure the most virulent abuse of his other work—cost him the friendship of Dr. Johnson; at this period criticism simply repressed his poetic fervor. It is characteristic of his natural modesty as well as of his appreciation of the general lack of sympathy with his Gothic muse that, except in very early letters to his brother,²² although he wrote freely of his plans, his progress with all his other work of all sorts, there is no mention of his poetry, even in his letters to Price, to whom he wrote intimately.²³

As far as we can judge from the poetry which Warton wrote, excellent as some of it is, his was not a great poetical genius. Poetical taste, feeling and enthusiasm he had in abundance, but there seems to have been a lack of the creative spark. How great a poet he might have become in more favourable circumstances it would be futile to enquire; we can only concern ourselves with the reasons why he was not, and with watching the development of his genius in other fields.

Unlike Gray,²⁴ who, under similar circumstances and with a greater poetic gift than Warton, was all but silenced by his uncongenial environment and his inability to express himself, Warton was able to turn the force of his genius into other channels. In Gray both the poet and the scholar were repressed; his powers were apparently inhibited by forces beyond his control, an involuntary but unconquerable inertia. Warton with greater energy, robust health, and more vigorous hold upon reality, could accomplish what Gray, because of his sensitive reticence, continual ill-health and dreamy impracticality, could not.

With less practical force, and probably less profound scholarship, Warton turned his gifts to better account and made for himself a much larger place in the history of English criticism and scholarship. Gray

²²Letters of October 29, 1746 and June 7, 1753. Woolf, *Op. cit.*, pp. 214, 217.

²³In two letters to Malone there is very brief mention of poetry. Jul. 29, 1787. 'You flatter me much in your opinion of my last Ode.' Jan. 3, 1789. 'I appear in the Papers, not only as an Esquire, but as the author of a New Year's Ode which I never wrote.' British Museum Additional MSS. No. 30375.

²⁴See Arnold's *Essay*.

had not the versatility and adaptability which enabled Warton to find another outlet for his genius when that of poetry proved difficult. He was equally a scholar with Warton, but his scholarship was barren. Both as a poet and as a scholar his fervor was repressed and his genius rendered inarticulate. In the case of Warton there was no such tragedy of unexpressed genius. Discouraged as a poet, he turned his poetical enthusiasm, his love for the Gothic, for romance, into criticism and history; the poet all but disappeared in the scholar. And with the works which were the results of his scholarship before us, we cannot regret the loss of that we never knew, when it would mean the sacrifice of much the value of which we partly recognize.

CHAPTER III

CRITICISM: THE OBSERVATIONS ON THE FAERIE QUEENE OF SPENSER 1754-1762

Warton did not immediately find himself in another field. He undertook a number of different kinds of work at this time, and either partly or wholly abandoned each. British antiquities claimed his attention, and this interest produced the *Description of . . . Winchester*;¹ the study of mediæval antiquity resulted in a project merely—that of collaborating with his brother in a history of the revival of learning,²—but it bore fruit later; as a result of his interest in the classics he planned translations of Homer and Apollonius Rhodius; the *Observations on the Faerie Queene* was the commencement of a larger plan of writing observations on the best of Spenser's work.

The hand of the poet is as evident as that of the scholar in the *Observations on the Faerie Queene of Spenser*.³ Warton's love for Spenser and his poetical enthusiasm were here first turned to criticism, but of a sort unknown before. And the secret of the new quality is to be found in this poetical enthusiasm of the writer which enabled him to study the poem from its own point of view, not hampered by artificial, pseudo-classical standards of which the poet had known nothing, but with a sympathetic appreciation of his literary models, the spirit of his age, his heritage of romance and chivalry, and the whole many-coloured life of the middle ages. These things Warton was able to see and to reveal not with the eighteenth century prejudice against, and ignorance of, the Gothic, but with the understanding and long familiarity of the real lover of Spenser.

¹*A Description of the City, College and Cathedral of Winchester. . . . The whole illustrated with . . . particulars, collected from a manuscript of A. Wood.* London, n. d. [1750] 12°.

²*Select Epistles of Angelus Politianus, Desiderius Erasmus, Hugo Grotius, and others, with notes of such importance as to constitute a history of the revival of learning.* Perhaps this was abandoned because of the plan of their mutual friend, Collins, to publish a *History of the Restoration of Learning under Leo the Tenth*. See Wooll, op. cit., p. 29 and *Hist. Eng. Poetry*, II, p. 361, note x.

³London, 1754. Second edition, corrected and enlarged, 2 vols. 1762. References are to the third edition, 2 vols., 1807.

The result of Warton's combined poetical enthusiasm and scholarly study of Spenser was that he produced in the *Observations on the Faerie Queene* the first important piece of modern historical criticism in the field of English literature. By the variety of its new tenets and the definitiveness of its revolt against the pseudo-classical criticism by rule, it marks the beginning of a new school. Out of the turmoil of the quarrel between the 'ancients' and the 'moderns' the pseudo-classical compromise had emerged. The 'moderns', by admitting and apologizing for a degree of barbarity and uncouthness in even their greatest poets, had established their right to a secure and reputable place in the assembly of immortals, although on the very questionable ground of conformity with the ancients and by submitting to be judged by rules which had not determined their development. It was thus by comparisons with the ancients that Dryden had found Spenser's verse harmonious but his design imperfect;⁴ it was in the light of the classical rules for epic poetry that Addison had praised *Paradise Lost*,⁵ and that Steele had wished an 'Encomium of Spenser'⁶ also.

Impossible as was the task of reconciling literature partly romantic and modern with classical and ancient standards, the critics of a rationalistic age did not hesitate to accomplish it; common sense was the pseudo-classical handmaiden that justified the rules, methodized nature, standardized critical taste, and restrained the 'Enthusiastick Spirit' and the *je ne sais quoi* of the school of taste. The task was a hard one, and the pseudo-classical position dangerous and ultimately untenable. A more extended study of literary history—innocuously begun by Rymer⁷—and an enlightened freedom from prejudice would show at the same time the inadequacy of the rules and the possibility of arriving at sounder critical standards.

These are the two principal gifts that Thomas Warton had with which he revolutionized criticism: intelligent independence to throw off the bondage of the rules, and broad knowledge to supply material for juster criteria. When he said, 'It is absurd to think of judging either Ariosto or Spenser by precepts which they did not attend to,'⁸ he not merely asserted their right to be judged by Gothic or 'romantic', as opposed to pseudo-classical, standards, but sounded the death-knell of criticism by rule, and the bugle-note of the modern school. When, in the same critical work, and even more impressively in two later ones,⁹ he brought

⁴*Essay on Satire*.

⁵*Spectator*, Jan. to May, 1712.

⁶*Spectator*, No. 540.

⁷*A Short View of Tragedy*, 1693. See Chapter V.

⁸*Observations*. I, p. 21.

⁹*Hist. Eng. Poetry*, 1774, 1778, 1781. Milton's *Poems upon Several Occasions*. 1785.

to bear upon the subject in hand a rich store of ideas and illustrations drawn from many literatures—Latin, Greek, Italian, French, and English in its obscure as well as its more familiar eras,—he rendered an even more important service on the side of constructive criticism.

Warton's *Observations* is connected not only with the history of critical theory in the eighteenth century but also with what is called the Spenserian revival. It was partly the culmination of one of several related movements tending toward the restoration of the older English classics. While Chaucer was slowly winning a small circle of appreciators; Shakespeare, from ignorantly apologetic admiration and garbled staging, through serious study and intelligent comprehension, was coming into his own; and Milton was attaining a vogue that left its mark on the new poetry; the Spenserian revival was simultaneously preparing to exert an even greater influence. Although Spenser was never without a select circle of readers, that circle was small and coldly critical during the pseudo-classical period when his principal charm was that which his moral afforded readers who held that the purpose of poetry was to instruct. Most readers assented to Jonson's dictum that Spenser 'writ no language' without attending to the caveat that followed, 'Yet I would have him read for his matter.' The difficulties of his language, the tiresomeness of his stanza,¹⁰ the unclassical imperfection of his design, and the extravagance of the adventures too often obscured even the beauty of his moral. Therefore it was after a pretty general neglect of his poetry that the eighteenth century saw a species of Spenserian imitation arise which showed to what low ebb the study of Spenser had sunk. The first of these imitators either ignorantly fancied that any arrangement of from six to ten iambic pentameter lines capped with an Alexandrine, with distinctly Popeian cadence and a sprinkling of 'I ween', 'I weet' and 'whilom' by way of antiquated diction, could pass for Spenserian verse,¹¹ or followed the letter of the stanza closely enough, but failed to

¹⁰Hughes, *Remarks on the Fairy Queen* prefixed to Spenser's *Works*, 2nd. ed. 1750. I, p. lxxvii.

¹¹Prior: *Ode to the Queen, written in imitation of Spenser's Style*. 1706. Preface. Whitehead: *Vision of Solomon*, 1739, and two *Odes to the Hon. Charles Townsend*. Boyse: *The Olives an Heroic Ode, etc. in the stanza of Spenser* (ababdcdee) 1736-7. *Vision of Patience: an Allegorical Poem; Psalm XLII: In imitation of the Style of Spenser* (ababcc, no Alexandrine) 1740. Blacklock: *Hymn to Divine Love, and Philanthus* (ababbcc) 1746. T. Warton, Sr.: *Philander* (ababcc) 1748. Lloyd: *Progress of Envy* (ababdcdd) 1751. Smith: *Thales* (ababbccc) 1751. See W. L. Phelps: *Beginnings of the English Romantic Movement*. Boston, 1902. Ch. on Spenserian Revival, and Appendix I, for a more complete list.

take their model seriously, and misapplied it to vulgar burlesque, social and political satire, and mere moralizing.¹² Their ignorance of the poet whom they professed to imitate is marked. Often they knew him only through Prior's imitations; usually their attempts at antiquated diction betray them.¹³ Occasionally, as in the case of Shenstone, a study of Spenser followed imitation of him, and led to a new attitude, changes in the imitation, and finally, apparently, to an admiration that he neither understood nor cared to admit.¹⁴

Of course by far the best of the Spenserian imitators was James Thomson, whose work was the first to rise above the merely imitative and to have an independent value as creative poetry. Although his *Adver-*

¹²Pope: *The Alley*, date unknown, an exercise in versification, and ill-natured burlesque. Croxall: *Two Original Cantos of the Fairy Queen*. 1713 and 1714. Akenside: *The Virtuoso*, 1737, mild satire. G. West: *Abuse of Travelling*, 1739, satire. Cambridge: *Archimage*, 1742-50, a clever parody. Shenstone: *The Schoolmistress*, 1742, satirical. Pitt: *The Jordan*, 1747, vulgar burlesque. Ridley: *Psyche*, 1747, moral allegory. Mendez: *The Seasons*, 1751, *Squire of Dames*, 1748-58. Thomson: *Castle of Indolence*, 1748. See also Phelps, as above.

¹³Such slips as 'nor ceasen he from study' and 'he would oft ypine' in Akenside's *Virtuoso* and even Thomson's note. 'The letter y is frequently placed in the beginning of a word by Spenser to lengthen it a syllable; and *en* at the end of a word for the same reason.' Glossary to the *Castle of Indolence*.

¹⁴I cannot agree with Professor Phelps that, 'as people persisted in admiring *The Schoolmistress* for its own sake, he finally consented to agree with them, and in later editions omitted the commentary explaining that the whole thing was done in jest'. *The Beginning of the English Romantic Movement*, p. 66. On the contrary, it seems pretty clear that although Shenstone had probably not come to any very profound appreciation of the older poet, his admiration for him became more and more serious, but that he lacked the courage of his convictions, and conformed outwardly with a public opinion wholly ignorant of Spenser. Two later letters of Shenstone's indicate pretty clearly that it was he, and not 'the people', whose taste for Spenser had developed. In November, 1745, he wrote to Graves (to whom he had written of his early contempt) that he had read Spenser once again and 'added full as much more to my *School-mistress*, in regard to *number of lines*; *something in point of matter* (or *manner* rather), *which* does not displease me. I would be glad if Mr. — were, upon your request, to give his opinion of particulars,' etc. Evidently the judgment was unfavorable, for he wrote the next year, 'I thank you for your perusal of that trivial poem. If I were going to print it, I should give way to your remarks *implicitly*, and would not *dare* to do otherwise. But so long as I keep it in manuscript, you will pardon my silly prejudices, if I chuse to read and shew it with the addition of most of my new stanzas. I own, I have a fondness for several, imagining them to be *more* in Spenser's way, yet more independent on the antique phrase, than any part of the poem; and, on that account, I cannot yet prevail on myself to banish *them* entirely; but were I to print, I should (with *some* reluctance) give way to your sentiments.' Shenstone's *Works*. 1777. III, pp. 105-6.

tisement and a few burlesque touches throughout the poem are evidence of the influence of the *Schoolmistress* and of the prevailing attitude toward Spenser, Thomson went further than mere external imitation and reproduced something of the melody and atmosphere of the *Fairy Queen*. Thus poetical enthusiasm began the Spenserian revival; it remained for a great critical enthusiasm to vindicate the source of this inspiration and to establish it on the firm basis of scholarly study and intelligent appreciation.

The first attempt at anything like an extended criticism of the *Fairy Queen* was in the two essays *On Allegorical Poetry* and *Remarks on the Fairy Queen* which prefaced John Hughes's edition of Spenser's works in 1715, the first eighteenth century edition.¹⁵ Steele, in the 540th *Spectator*, three years before, had desired an 'Encomium of Spenser', 'that charming author', like Addison's Milton papers, but nothing further than his own meagre hints was forthcoming. And Hughes's attitude, like that of the imitators, was wholly apologetic.

Hughes seems almost to have caught a glimpse of the promised land when he refused to examine the *Fairy Queen* by the classical rules for epic poetry, saying: 'As it is plain the Author never design'd it by those Rules, I think it ought rather to be consider'd as a Poem of a particular kind, describing in a Series of Allegorical Adventures or Episodes the most noted Virtues and Vices: to compare it therefore with the Models of Antiquity, wou'd be like drawing a Parallel between the *Roman* and the *Gothick* Architecture.'¹⁶ At first sight one is inclined to think this very near to Warton's revolutionary dictum, but the bungling way in which he spoiled the effect of this striking statement by preparing in advance a set of pseudo-classical and misfit standards to apply as he exposed the unsuitability of the old, merely by the substitution of allegory for epic, shows that he was a true pseudo-classicist after all. He could not, nor would, throw off his allegiance to the ancients. If the *Fairy Queen* could not be considered as an epic, it could be judged as an allegory, the rules of which, though not described by the ancients, were easily determinable. And in attempting to set forth the rules for allegorical poetry, he tried to conform to the spirit of the classical critics as he understood it, and to illustrate his subject by examples from classical poets. Nevertheless he felt some reluctance in introducing a subject which was 'something out of the way, and not expressly treated

¹⁵And the first attempt at an annotated edition. *Spenser's Works, to which is prefix'd . . . an Essay on Allegorical Poetry* by Mr. Hughes. 6 vols. London, 1715. Second edition, 1750. There is a second preface, *Remarks on the Fairy Queen*. References are to the second edition.

¹⁶*Remarks on the Fairy Queen*. I, p. xliii.

upon by those who have laid down Rules for the Art of Poetry.¹⁷ Hughes's ideas of what should constitute successful allegory were therefore embodied in his *Essay on Allegorical Poetry*, by the uncertain light of which the critic hoped 'not only to discover many Beauties in the *Fairy Queen*, but likewise to excuse some of its Irregularities.'¹⁸

Hughes did not, however, yield to the spell of 'magic Spenser's wildly-warbled song.' While he admitted that his fable gave 'the greatest Scope to that Range of Fancy which was so remarkably his Talent'¹⁹ and that his plan, though not well chosen, was at least well executed and adapted to his talent, he apologized for and excused both fable and plan on the score of the Italian models which he followed, and the remnants of the 'old Gothic Chivalry' which yet survived. The only praise he could give the poem was wholly pseudo-classical,—for the moral and didactic bent which the poet had contrived to give the allegory,²⁰ and for some fine passages where the author 'rises above himself' and imitates the ancients.²¹ In spite of his statement that the *Fairy Queen* was not to be examined by the strict rules of epic poetry, he could not free himself from that bondage, and the most of his essay is taken up with a discussion of the poem in the light of the rules. Moreover Hughes was but ill-equipped for his task; he failed even to realize that a great field of literary history must be thoroughly explored before the task of elucidating Spenser could be intelligently undertaken, and that genuine enthusiasm for the poet could alone arouse much interest in him. These are the reasons why nearly forty years elapsed before the edition was reprinted, and why it failed to give a tremendous impetus to the Spenserian revival. Yet, notwithstanding its defects, it is extremely important that Hughes should have undertaken at all the editing of so neglected a poet.²² It is a straw that points the direction of the wind.

The next attempt at Spenserian criticism was a small volume of *Remarks on Spenser's Poems and on Milton's Paradise Regained*, published anonymously in 1734, and soon recognized as the work of Dr. Jortin, a classical scholar of some repute. This is practically valueless as a piece of criticism. But Jortin was at least partly conscious of his

¹⁷*Essay on Allegorical Poetry*, I, p. xxi.

¹⁸*Remarks on the Fairy Queen*, I, p. xlii.

¹⁹*Ibid.* I, p. xliv.

²⁰*Ibid.* I, p. xl. *Essay on Allegorical Poetry*.

²¹*Ibid.* I, p. l.

²²The neglect of Spenser is best shown by the few editions of either the *Fairy Queen* or the complete works which had appeared since the first three books of the former were published in 1590. *Faerie Queene*, 1st. ed. 4to. 1590-6; 2nd, 1596; 3rd, fol., 1609; Birch ed. 3 vols. 4to. 1751. *Poetical Works*. 1st fol. ed. 1611; 2nd, 1617-18; 3rd, 1679. Hughes, 1st ed. 1715, 2nd, 1750.

failure and of a reason for it, though he was more anxious to have the exact text determined by a 'collation of Editions, and by comparing the Author with himself' than to furnish an interpretive criticism; and he acknowledged himself unwilling to bestow the necessary time and application for the work,²⁸—a gratifying acknowledgement of the fact that no valuable work could be done in this field without special preparation for it.

And when Thomas Warton was able to bring this special preparation for the first time to the study of the *Fairy Queen*, he produced a revolution in criticism. Freed from the tyranny of the rules by the perception of their limitations, he substituted untried avenues of approach and juster standards of criticism, and revealed beauties which could never have been discovered with the old restrictions. That he should be without trace of pseudo-classicism is something we cannot expect; but that his general critical method and principles are ultimately irreconcilable with even the most generous interpretation of that term is a conclusion one cannot escape after a careful study of the *Observations on the Fairy Queen*.

Briefly, the causes of Warton's superiority over all previous critics of Spenser, the reasons why he became through this piece of critical writing the founder of a new kind of criticism, are four. First, he recognized the inadequacy of the classical rules, as interpreted by Boileau and other modern commentators, as standards for judging modern literature, and declared his independence of them and his intention of following new methods based upon the belief that the author's purpose is at least as important a subject for critical study as the critic's theories and that imagination is as important a factor in creative literature as reason. Second, he introduced the modern historical method of criticism by recognizing that no work of art could be independently judged, isolated from the conditions under which it was produced, without reference to the influences which determined its character, and without considering its relation to other literatures. In taking this broad view of his subject, Warton was, of course, recognizing the necessity for a comparative study of literature. In the third place, and as a consequence of this independence and this greater breadth of view, Warton understood more fully than his contemporaries the true relation between classical and modern literature, understood that the English writers of the boasted Augustan age, in renouncing their heritage from the middle ages, had deprived themselves of the qualities which alone could have redeemed their desiccated pseudo-classicism. And last, Warton made a place in criticism for the reader's spontaneous delight and enthusiasm.

²⁸Jortin's conclusion quoted in Nichols's *Literary Anecdotes*, II, p. 53. H. E. Cory says nothing of Jortin's *Remarks* in his monograph, *The Critics of Edmund Spenser*, Univ. of California Pub. in Mod. Phil. II; 2, pp. 71-182.

Few critics of the eighteenth century recognized any difference between their own rules and practice and those of the ancients, or saw the need for modern standards for judging modern poems. Just here comes the important and irreparable break between Warton and his contemporaries. While Hughes and the rest attempted to justify Spenser by pointing out conformities to the rules²⁴ where they existed or might be fancied, and condemned his practice when they failed to find any, Warton was at some pains to show that Hughes failed and that such critics must fail because their critical method was wrong.²⁵ He pointed out that the *Fairy Queen* cannot be judged by rule, that the 'plan and conduct' of Spenser's poem 'is highly exceptionable', 'is confused and irregular', and has 'no general unity';²⁶ it fails completely when examined by the rules. To Warton this clearly showed the existence of another standard of criticism—not the Aristotelian, but the poet's: Spenser had not tried to write like Homer, but like Ariosto; his standard was romantic, not classical; and he was to be judged by what he tried to do.

Warton's declaration of independence of pseudo-classical criticism was a conscious revolt; yet it was one to which he made some effort to win the assent of his contemporaries by conceding that Spenser's frequent extravagances²⁷ did violate the rules approved by an age that took pride in its critical taste. His desire to engage their interest, however, neither succeeded in that purpose nor persuaded him that those rules were properly applied to poems written in ignorance of them. There is no uncertainty, no compromise with pseudo-classical criticism in the flat defiance, 'it is absurd to think of judging either Ariosto or Spenser by precepts which they did not attend to.'²⁸

Having thus condemned the accepted standards as inadequate for a just criticism of the *Fairy Queen*, Warton's next purpose was to find those by which it could be properly judged: not the rules of which the poet was ignorant, but the literature with which he was familiar. He recognized quite clearly a distinction between a classical and a romantic poet, and accounted for it by a difference of circumstances. Warton's even then extensive knowledge of the neglected periods of earlier English literature gave him a power that most of his contemporaries lacked and

²⁴Dryden had done the same thing in the *Dedication to the Translation of Juvenal* by pointing out how the character of Prince Arthur 'shines throughout the whole poem,' and Warton took issue squarely with him on the point and denied any such unity. See *Observations*, I, p. 10-11. Addison used the same method in his papers on *Paradise Lost*. Beni was probably the originator of this sort of misapplied criticism in his comparison of Tasso with Homer and Virgil. I, p. 3.

²⁵*Ibid.* I, p. 11 ff.

²⁶*Ibid.* I, p. 17.

²⁷*Ibid.* I, p. 18.

²⁸*Ibid.* I, p. 21.

enabled him to see that Spenser's peculiarities were those of his age, that the 'knights and damsels, the tournaments and enchantments, of Spenser' were not oddities but the familiar and admired features of romance, a prevailing literary form of the age, and that 'the fashion of the times' determined Spenser's purpose of becoming a '*romantic Poet*.'²⁹

Warton determined therefore not only to judge but to praise Spenser as a romantic³⁰ poet. He found that as the characteristic appeal of pseudo-classical poetry was to the intellect, to the reason, romantic poetry addressed itself to the feelings, to the imagination. Its excellence, therefore, consisted not in design and proportion, but in interest and variety of detail. The poet's business was 'to engage the fancy, and interest the attention by bold and striking images, in the formation, and the disposition of which, little labour or art was applied. The various and marvelous were the chief sources of delight'.³¹ Hence Spenser had ransacked 'reality and romance', 'truth and fiction' to adorn his 'fairy structure', and Warton revelled in the result, in its very formlessness and richness, which he thought preferable, in a romantic poem, to exactness. 'Exactness in his poem,' he said, 'would have been like the cornice which a painter introduced in the grotto of Calypso. Spenser's beauties are like the flowers in Paradise.'³²

When beauties thus transcend nature, delight goes beyond reason. Warton did not shrink from the logical result of giving rein to imagination; he was willing to recognize the romantic quest for beauties beyond the reach of art, to sacrifice reason and 'nature methodiz'd' in an exaltation of a higher quality which rewarded the reader with a higher kind of enjoyment. 'If the Fairy Queen,' he said, 'be destitute of that arrangement and æconomy which epic severity requires, yet we scarcely regret the loss of these, while their place is so amply supplied by something which more powerfully attracts us: something which engages the affections, the feelings of the heart, rather than the cold approbation of the head. If there be any poem whose graces please, because they are situated beyond the reach of art, and where the force and faculties of creative imagination³³ delight, because they are unassisted and unre-

²⁹*Ibid.* II, p. 72.

³⁰Warton used the word *romantic* as a derivative of *romance*, implying the characteristics of the mediæval romances, and I have used the word frequently in this chapter with that meaning.

³¹*Ibid.* I, p. 22.

³²*Ibid.* I, p. 23.

³³Without the same precision in nomenclature but with equal clearness of idea Warton distinguished between creative and imaginative power in exactly the same way that Coleridge differentiated imagination and fancy. He did not compose exact philosophical definitions of the two qualities, but in a careful contrast between the poetic faculties of Spenser and Ariosto, he made the same distinction. Spenser's

strained by those of deliberate judgment, it is this. In reading Spenser, if the critic is not satisfied, yet the reader is transported.³⁴

When Warton thus made a place for transport in a critical discourse, he had parted company with his contemporaries and opened the way for the whole romantic exaltation of feeling. He had turned from Dr. Johnson, who condemned 'all power of fancy over reason' as a 'degree of insanity',³⁵ and faced toward Blake, who exalted the imagination and called reason the only evil.³⁶ Every propriety of Queen Anne criticism had now been violated. Not satisfied with condemning all previous Spenserian criticism as all but nonsense, Warton dared to place the uncritical reader's delight above the critic's deliberate disapproval, and then to commend that enthusiasm and the beauties that aroused it. In repudiating the pseudo-classical rules, Warton enunciated two revolutionary dicta: there are other critical standards than those of Boileau and the ancients (save the mark!); there are other poetical beauties than those of Pope and 'nature methodiz'd.'

Revolutionary as he was in his enjoyment of Spenser's fable, Warton had not at the time he wrote the *Observations* freed himself from the pseudo-classical theories of versification and he agreed with his predecessors in his discussion of this subject. Although he did not feel the nineteenth century romanticist's enthusiasm for Spenser's versification, he was nevertheless sufficiently the poet to appreciate and to enjoy his success with it. 'It is indeed surprising,' he said, 'that Spenser should execute a poem of uncommon length, with so much spirit and ease, laden as he was with so many shackles, and embarrassed with so complicated a *bondage* of *riming*. . . . His sense and sound are equally flowing and uninterrupted.'³⁷ Similarly, with respect to language, we neither expect nor find enthusiasm. Warton thought Jonson 'perhaps unreasonable,'³⁸ and found the origin of his language in the language of his age, as he found the origin of his design in its romances. Long acquaint-

power, imagination, he described as creative, vital; it endeavours to body forth the unsubstantial, to represent by visible and external symbols the ideal and abstracted. (II, p. 77.) Ariosto's faculty, fancy, he called imitative, lacking in inventive power. (I, p. 308; II, p. 78.) Although Warton at times applied the term *imagination* loosely to both, there was no confusion of ideas; when he used both terms it was with the difference in meaning just described. In speaking of the effect of the marvels of romance upon the poetic faculty he said they 'rouse and invigorate all the powers of imagination' and 'store the fancy with . . . images.' (II, p. 323.)

³⁴*Ibid.* I, p. 24.

³⁵*Rasselas*. Ch. XLIV.

³⁶H. C. Robinson: *Diary*. Ed. Sadler, Boston 1870, II, p. 43.

³⁷*Obs.* I, pp. 168-170.

³⁸In his opinion that 'Spenser, in affecting the ancients, writ no language'. I, p. 184.

ance enabled him to read the *Fairy Queen* with ease; he denied that Spenser's language was either so affected or so obsolete as it was generally supposed, and asserted that 'For many stanzas together we may frequently read him with as much facility as we can the same number of lines in Shakespeare.'³⁹ In his approval and appreciation of Spenser's moral purpose Warton was, of course, nearer to his pseudo-classical predecessors than to his romantic followers; however, without relinquishing that prime virtue of the old school, the solidity which comes from well-established principles, he attained to new virtues, greater catholicity of taste and flexibility of judgment.

In seeking in the literature of and before the sixteenth century and in the manners and customs of the 'spacious times of great Elizabeth' for the explanation of Spenser's poem—so far as explanation of genius is possible—Warton was, as has been said, laying the foundations of modern historical criticism. Some slight progress had been made in this direction before, but without important results. Warton was by no means original in recognizing Spenser's debt to the Italian romances which were so popular in his day, and to Ariosto in particular. And many critics agreed that he was 'led by the prevailing notions of his age to write an irregular and romantic poem.' They, however, regarded his age as one of barbarity and ignorance of the rules, and its literature as unworthy of study and destitute of intrinsic value. No critic before Warton had realized the importance of supplementing an absolute by an historical criticism, of reconstructing, so far as possible, a poet's environment and the conditions under which he worked, in order to judge his poetry. 'In reading the works of a poet who lived in a remote age,' he said, 'it is necessary that we should look back upon the customs and manners which prevailed in that age. We should endeavour to place ourselves in the writer's situation and circumstances. Hence we shall become better enabled to discover how his turn of thinking, and manner of composing, were influenced by familiar appearances and established objects, which are utterly different from those with which we are at present surrounded.'⁴⁰ And, realizing that the neglect of these details was fatal to good criticism, that the 'commentator'⁴¹ whose critical enqui-

³⁹*Ibid.* I, p. 185. This parallel does not greatly help the case in an age when Atterbury could write to Pope that he found 'the hardest part of Chaucer . . . more intelligible' than some parts of Shakespeare and that 'not merely through the faults of the edition, but the obscurity of the writer.' Pope's *Works*, Elwin-Courthope ed. IX, p. 26.

⁴⁰*Obs.* II, p. 71.

⁴¹Warton ably and sharply met Pope's attack on Theobald for including in his edition of Shakespeare a sample of his sources, of "—All such reading as never was read"; and concluded 'If Shakespeare is worth reading, he is worth explain-

ries are employed on Spenser, Jonson, and the rest of our elder poets, will in vain give specimens of his classical erudition, unless, at the same time, he brings to his work a mind intimately acquainted with those books, which though now forgotten, were yet in common use and high repute about the time in which his authors respectively wrote, and which they consequently must have read,⁴² he resolutely reformed his own practice.

Warton not only perceived the necessity of the historical method of studying the older poets, but he had acquired what very few of his contemporaries had attained, sufficient knowledge of the earlier English literature to undertake such a study of Spenser. He embarked upon the study of the *Fairy Queen*, its sources and literary background, with a fund of knowledge which, however much later scholars, who have taken up large holdings in the territory charted by that pioneer, may unjustly scorn its superficiality or inexactness, was for that time quite exceptional, and which could not fail to illuminate the poem to the point of transfiguration. Every reader of Spenser had accepted his statement that he took Ariosto as his model, but no one before Warton had remarked another model, one closer in respect of matter, which the poet no doubt thought too obvious to mention, the old romances of chivalry. Warton observed that where Spenser's plan is least like Ariosto's, it most resembles the romances; that, although he 'formed his Faerie Queene upon the fanciful plan of Ariosto', he formed the particular adventures of his knight upon the romances. 'Spenser's first book is,' he said, 'a regular and precise imitation of such a series of action as we frequently find in books of chivalry.'⁴³

In proof of Spenser's indebtedness to the romances Warton cited the prevalence of romances of chivalry in his day, and pointed out particular borrowings from this popular poetry. In the first place he insisted again and again not only that the 'encounters of chivalry' which appeared extraordinary to modern eyes were familiar to readers in Spenser's day,⁴⁴ but that the practices of chivalry were even continued

ing; and the researches used for so valuable and elegant a purpose, merit the thanks of genius and candour, not the satire of prejudice and ignorance.' II, p. 319. In similar vein he rebuked such of his own critics as found his quotations from the romances 'trifling and uninteresting': 'such readers can have no taste for Spenser.' I, p. 91.

⁴²*Ibid.* II, pp. 317-18.

⁴³*Ibid.* I, p. 26.

⁴⁴And even later to the time of Milton. Warton found Milton's 'mind deeply tinctured with romance reading' and his imagination and poetry affected thereby. I, p. 257 and p. 350. Even Dryden wanted to write an epic about Arthur or the Black Prince but on the model of Virgil and Spenser, not Spenser and the romances. *Essay on Satire*.

to some extent.⁴⁵ Warton's close acquaintance with the literature of the sixteenth century and before showed him that the matter of the romances was common property and had permeated other works than those of mediæval poets. He discovered that the story of Arthur, from which Spenser borrowed most, was so generally known and so great a favourite that incidents from it were made the basis for entertainment of Elizabeth at Kenilworth,⁴⁶ and that Arthur and his knights were alluded to by writers so various as Caxton, Ascham, Sidney, Puttenham, Bacon, and Jonson;⁴⁷ that even Ariosto⁴⁸ himself borrowed from the story of Arthur. At the same time his first-hand knowledge of the romances enabled him to point out among those which most directly influenced the *Fairy Queen* Malory's *Morte Arthur*, the largest contributor, of course, from which such details as the story of Sir Tristram, King Ryence and the Mantle of Beards, the Holy Grail, and the Blatant Beast were drawn;⁴⁹ *Bevis of Southampton*, which furnished the incident of the well of marvelous healing power;⁵⁰ the ballad of the Boy and the Mantle, from the French romance, *Le Court Mantel*, which suggested Spenser's conceit of Florimel's girdle.⁵¹ Warton also carefully discussed Spenser's fairy mythology, which supplanted the classical mythology as his romantic adventures replaced those of antiquity,

⁴⁵*Obs.* I, p. 27 and II, pp. 71-72. Warton cited Holinshed's *Chronicles* (Stowe's contin.) where is an account of a tourney for the entertainment of Queen Elizabeth, in which Fulke Greville and Sir Philip Sidney, among others, entered the lists. *Holin. Chronicles*, ed. 1808. IV, p. 437 ff.

⁴⁶Warton quotes Laneham's '*Letter wherein part of the Entertainment untoo the Queen's Majesty at Killinworth Castl in Warwicksheer in this Soomer's progress, 1575, is signified,*' and Gascoigne's *Pleasures of Kenilworth Castle, Works*, 1576. *Obs.* I, pp. 41, 43.

⁴⁷*Ibid.* I, pp. 50-74.

⁴⁸*Ibid.* I, pp. 53-57.

⁴⁹*Ibid.* I, pp. 27-57.

⁵⁰*Ibid.* I, pp. 69-71.

⁵¹*Ibid.* I, p. 76. Warton says an 'ingenious correspondent communicated' to him this 'old ballad or metrical romance.' Part of *Le Court Mantel* he found in Sainte Palaye's *Memoires sur l'ancienne Chevalerie*, 1760. Other details, which could not be traced to particular romances, Warton attributed to 'a mind strongly tinged with romantic ideas.' One of these, the custom of knights swearing on their swords, Upton had explained as derived from the custom of the Huns and Goths, related by Jornandes and Ammianus Marcellinus, but Warton pointed out that it was much more probably derived from the more familiar romances. II, p. 65. A Bodleian MS. containing *Sir Degore* and other romances is quoted from and described, II, pp. 5-9.

ascribing its origin to romance and folk-lore of Celtic and ultimately Oriental origin.⁵²

As in the case of mediæval romance, Warton was the first critic to consider in any detail Spenser's indebtedness to Chaucer. Antiquarians and a few poets had been mildly interested in Chaucer, but his importance for the study of the origins of English poetry had been ignored in the prevalent delusion that the classics were the ultimate sources of poetry. Dryden, to be sure, had remarked that Spenser imitated Chaucer's language,⁵³ and subsequent readers, including Warton, concurred. But it still remained for Warton to point out that Spenser was also indebted to Chaucer for ideas, and to show the extent and nature of his debt by collecting 'specimens of Spenser's imitations from Chaucer, both of language and sentiment.'⁵⁴ Without, of course, attempting to exhaust the subject, Warton collected enough parallel passages to prove that Spenser was not only an 'attentive reader and professed admirer', but also an imitator of Chaucer. For example, he pointed out that the list of trees in the wood of error was more like Chaucer's in the *Assembly of Fowls* than like similar passages in classical poets mentioned by Jortin;⁵⁵ that he had borrowed the magic mirror which Merlin gave Ryence from the *Squire's Tale*,⁵⁶ and from the *Romance of the Rose*, the conceit of Cupid dressed in flowers.⁵⁷ By a careful comparison with Chaucer's language, Warton was able to explain some doubtful passages as well as to show Spenser's draughts from 'the well of English undefiled.'

One can scarcely overestimate the importance of Warton's evident first-hand knowledge of Chaucer in an age when he was principally known only through Dryden's and Pope's garbled modernizations, or Milton's reference to him who

..... 'left half-told
The story of Cambuscan bold.'

⁵²*Ibid.* I, pp. 77-89. Warton often used the terms Celtic and Norse very loosely without recognizing the difference. Like Huet and Mallet and other students of romance he was misled by the absurd and fanciful ethnologies in vogue in the 17th and 18th centuries. For his theory of romance see his dissertation 'On the Origin of Romantic Fiction in Europe' prefixed to the first volume of his *History of English Poetry*, 1774.

⁵³*Essay on Satire*. Dryden frequently referred to Chaucer as Spenser's master, meaning in the matter of language. See also *Dedication of the Pastorals* and *Preface to the Fables*.

⁵⁴Section V 'Of Spenser's Imitations from Chaucer.'

⁵⁵In his *Remarks on Spenser's Poems*. See *Observations* I, p. 190.

⁵⁶*Ibid.* I, p. 205. Warton showed many instances of Spenser's interest in Cambuscan, including his continuation of part of the story. See also pp. 210 ff.

⁵⁷*Ibid.* I, p. 221.

Warton was not satisfied that Chaucer should be studied merely to illustrate Spenser; he recognized his intrinsic value as well, and suffered his enthusiasm for Chaucer to interrupt the thread of his criticism of Spenser, while he lauded and recommended to his neglectful age the charms of the older poet.⁵⁸ To be sure his reasons for admiring Chaucer were somewhat too romantic to convince an age that preferred regular beauties; his 'romantic arguments', 'wildness of painting', 'simplicity and antiquity of expression', though 'pleasing to the imagination' and calculated to 'transport us into some fairy region', were certainly not the qualities to attract Upton or Hughes or Dr. Johnson. Unlike the pseudo-classical admirers of Chaucer, Warton held that to read modern imitations was not to know Chaucer; that to provide such substitutes was to contribute rather to the neglect than to the popularity of the original. With characteristic soundness of scholarship he condemned the prevalence of translations because they encouraged 'indolence and illiteracy', displaced the originals and thus gradually vitiated public taste.⁵⁹

The study of Spenser's age yielded the third element which Warton introduced into Spenserian criticism—the influence of the mediæval moralities and allegorical masques. Warton's study of Spenser's allegory is of quite another sort than Hughes's essay. Instead of trying to concoct a set of *a priori* rules for a kind of epic which should find its justification in its moral, Warton, as usual, was concerned with forms of allegory as they actually existed and were familiar to his poet, and with the history of allegorical poetry in England. Without denying the important influence of Ariosto, he pointed out that his predecessors had erred in thinking the *Orlando Furioso* a sufficient model; he saw that the characters of Spenser's allegory much more resembled the 'emblematical personages, visibly decorated with their proper attributes, and actually endued with speech, motion and life',⁶⁰ with which Spenser was familiar upon the stage, than the less symbolical characters of Ariosto. Warton could support his position by quoting references in the *Fairy*

⁵⁸Warton found opportunity to express more fully his enthusiasm for Chaucer in a detailed study comparable to this of Spenser, in his *History of English Poetry* twenty years later.

⁵⁹*Obs.* I, pp. 269-71. Warton extended his criticism to translations of classical authors as well. Of course the greatest of the classicists, Dryden and Johnson, realized the limits of translation, that it was only a makeshift. See *Preface to translation of Ovid's epistle, to Sylva and to the Fables*, and Boswell's *Johnson*, Hill ed. III, p. 36. But the popularity of Dryden's translations and the large number of translations and imitations that appeared during his and succeeding generations, justified Warton's criticism.

⁶⁰*Obs.* II, p. 78.

Queen to masques and dumb shows,⁶¹ and by tracing somewhat the progress of allegory in English poetry before Spenser.⁶² It is characteristic that he should not have been satisfied to observe that allegory was popular in Spenser's age, but that he should wish to explain it by a 'retrospect of English poetry from the age of Spenser.'⁶³ Superficial and hasty as this survey is, it must have confirmed Warton's opinion that a thorough exploration of early English poetry was needed, and so anticipated his *magnum opus*. And we can find little fault with its conclusions, even when he says that this poetry 'principally consisted in visions and allegories', when he could add as a matter of information, 'there are, indeed, the writings of some English poets now remaining, who wrote before Gower or Chaucer.'

In rejecting the conclusions of pseudo-classical criticism, in regarding Spenser as the heir of the middle ages, Warton did not by any means overlook the influence of the renaissance, of the classical revival, upon his poetry. His study of the classical sources from which Spenser embellished his plan⁶⁴ is as careful and as suggestive as his study of the mediæval sources; it is not only so strikingly new. His attack on Scaliger, who subordinated a comparative method to the demonstration of *a priori* conclusions, shows that he was a sounder classicist than that pseudo-classical leader. Scaliger, he said, more than once 'betrayed his ignorance of the nature of ancient poetry';⁶⁵ he 'had no notion of simple and genuine beauty; nor had ever considered the manners and customs which prevailed in early times.'⁶⁶ Warton was a true classicist in his admiration for Homer and Aristotle, and in his recognition of them as 'the genuine and uncorrupted sources of ancient poetry and ancient criticism';⁶⁷ but, as has been said, he did not make the mistake of supposing them the sources of modern poetry and criticism as well.

Warton shows in this essay an extraordinarily clear recognition of the relation between classical, mediæval and modern literatures, and a corresponding adaptation of criticism to it. By a wide application of

⁶¹*Ibid.* II, pp. 78-81. 'Spenser expressly denominates his most exquisite groupe of allegorical figures, the *Maske of Cupid*. Thus, without recurring to conjecture, his own words evidently demonstrate that he sometimes had representations of this sort in his eye.'

⁶²*Ibid.* II, pp. 93-103. Beginning with Adam Davy and the author of *Piers Plowman*. Like Spence, Warton recognized in Sackville's *Induction* the nearest approach to Spenser, and a probable source of influence upon him.

⁶³*Ibid.* II, p. 92.

⁶⁴*Ibid.* I, pp. 92-156.

⁶⁵*Ibid.* I, p. 147.

⁶⁶*Ibid.* I, p. 133.

⁶⁷*Ibid.* I, p. 1.

the historical method he saw that English poetry was the joint product of two principal strains, the ancient or classical, and the mediaeval or romantic; and that the poet or critic who neglected either disclaimed half his birthright. The poetry of Spenser's age, Warton perceived, drew from both sources. Although the study of the ancient models was renewed, the 'romantic manner of poetical composition introduced and established by the Provençal bards' was not superseded by a 'new and more legitimate taste of writing.' And Warton as a critic accepted—as Scaliger would not—the results of his historical study: he admired and desired the characteristic merits of classical poetry, 'justness of thought and design', 'decorum', 'uniformity',⁶⁸ he 'so far conformed to the reigning maxims of modern criticism, as . . . to recommend classical propriety',⁶⁹ but he wished them completed and adorned with the peculiar imaginative beauties of the 'dark ages', those fictions which 'rouse and invigorate all the powers of imagination [and] store the fancy with those sublime and charming images, which true poetry best delights to display.'⁷⁰

The inevitable result of recognizing the relation between the classical and romantic sources of literature was contempt for pseudo-classicism, for those poets and critics who rejected the beauties of romance for the less natural perfections approved by the classical and French theorists, who aped the ancients without knowing them and despised their own romantic ancestry. The greatest English poets, Warton perceived, were those who combined both elements in their poetry; those who rejected either fell short of the highest rank. And therefore he perceived the loss to English poetry when, after the decline of romance and allegory, 'a poetry succeeded, in which imagination gave way to correctness, sublimity of description to delicacy of sentiment, and majestic imagery to conceit and epigram.' Warton's brief summary of this poetry points out its weakness. 'Poets began now to be more attentive to words, than to things and objects. The nicer beauties of happy expression were preferred to the daring strokes of great conception. Satire, that bane of the sublime, was imported from France. The muses were debauched at court; and polite life, and familiar manners, became their only themes. The simple dignity of Milton⁷¹ was either entirely neglected, or mistaken for bombast and insipidity, by the refined readers of a dissolute age, whose taste and morals were equally vitiated.'⁷²

⁶⁸*Ibid.* I, p. 2.

⁶⁹*Ibid.* II, pp. 324-5.

⁷⁰*Ibid.* II, pp. 322-3.

⁷¹There is a digression on Milton in the *Observations* (I, pp. 335-351), the prelude to his edition of Milton, 1785 and 1791.

⁷²*Ibid.* II, pp. 106-8.

The culmination—perhaps the crowning—glory of Warton's first piece of critical writing is his keen delight in the task. Addison had praised and popularized criticism,⁷³ but with reservations; and most people—even until recent times (if indeed the idea has now wholly disappeared from the earth)—would agree with Warton that the 'business of criticism is commonly laborious and dry.' Yet he affirms that his work 'has proved a most agreeable task;' that it has 'more frequently amused than fatigued (his) attention,' and that 'much of the pleasure that Spenser experienced in composing the *Fairy Queen*, must, in some measure, be shared by his commentator; and the critic, on this occasion, may speak in the words, and with the rapture, of the poet,—

The wayes through which my weary steppes I guyde
In this *delightfull land of faerie*,
Are so exceeding spacious and wyde,
And sprinkled with such sweet varietie
Of all that pleasant is to ear or eye,
That I nigh ravisht with rare thoughts delight,
My tedious travel do forgett thereby:
And when I gin to feele decay of might,
It strength to me supplies, and cheares my dulled spright.

Warton's real classicism and his endeavours to carry his contemporaries with him by emphasizing wherever possible his accord with them blinded them for a time to the strongly revolutionary import of the *Observations on the Fairy Queen*, and the book was well received by pseudo-classical readers. Its scholarly merits and the impulse it gave to the study of literature were generously praised by Dr. Johnson,⁷⁴ who could partly appreciate the merits of the historical method, but would not emulate them. This is however scarcely a fair test, for the 'watch-dog of classicism', although an indifferent scholar when compared with Warton, had an almost omnivorous thirst for knowledge, and although he despised research for its own sake, his nearest sympathy with the romantic movement was when its researches tended to increase the sum of human knowledge. Warburton was delighted with the *Ob-*

⁷³In his critical essays in the *Spectator*.

⁷⁴July 16, 1754. 'I now pay you a very honest acknowledgement, for the advancement of the literature of our native country. You have shewn to all, who shall hereafter attempt the study of our ancient authours, the way to success; by directing them to the perusal of the books which those authours had read. Of this method, Hughes and men much greater than Hughes, seem never to have thought. The reason why the authours, which are yet read, of the sixteenth century, are so little understood, is, that they are read alone; and no help is borrowed from those who lived with them, or before them.' Boswell's *Johnson*, Hill ed. I, p. 270.

servations, and told Warton so.⁷⁵ Walpole complimented the author upon it, though he had no fondness for Spenser.⁷⁶ The reviewer for the *Monthly Review*⁷⁷ showed little critical perception. Although he discussed the book section by section, he discovered nothing extraordinary in it, nothing but the usual influence of Ariosto, defects of the language, parallel passage and learned citation; and he reached the height of inadequacy when he thus commended Warton's learning: 'Upon the whole, Mr. Warton seems to have studied his author with much attention, and has obliged us with no bad prelude for the edition, of which he advises us.'⁷⁸ His acquaintance with our earliest writers must have qualified him with such a relish of the *Anglo-Saxon* dialect, as few poets, since *Prior*, seem to have imbibed.' A scurrilous anonymous pamphlet, *The Observer Observ'd, or Remarks on a certain curious Tract, intitl'd, Observations on the Faerie Queen of Spenser, by Thomas Warton, A. M.,* etc, which appeared two years after the *Observations*, deserved the harsh treatment it received at the hands of the reviewers.⁷⁹ The immediate results on the side of Spenserian criticism were not striking. Two editions of the *Fairy Queen*, by John Upton and Ralph Church, appeared in 1758. Of these, the first was accused at once of borrowing without acknowledgment from Warton's *Observations*;⁸⁰ the second is described as having notes little enlightening;⁸¹ both editors were still measuring Spenser by the ancients.⁸²

From this time the Spenserian movement was poetical. Warton's essay put a new seal of critical approval upon the *Fairy Queen* and

⁷⁵Warburton's *Letters*, No. CLVII, Nov. 30, 1762. *Works*, London, 1809. XIII, p. 338.

⁷⁶Walpole to Warton, October 30, 1767. Walpole's *Letters*, ed. cit. VII, p. 144.

⁷⁷August, 1754, XI, pp. 112-124.

⁷⁸Perhaps Upton's Edition of the *Fairy Queen*, which is frequently referred to in the second edition of the *Observations*. There is ample evidence in Johnson's letters and Warton's comments upon them, as well as in his own manuscript notes in his copy of Spenser's *Works* that he intended a companion work of remarks on the best of Spenser's works, but this made so little progress that it cannot have been generally known. See Boswell's *Johnson*, I, p. 276, and Warton's copy of Spenser's *Works*, ed. 1617. This quarto volume, which I have examined in the British Museum, contains copious notes which subsequently formed the basis for the *Observations*. The notes continue partly through the shorter poems as well as the *Fairy Queen*. Some of them were evidently made for the second edition, for they contain references to Upton's edition.

⁷⁹*Mon. Rev.* July, 1756, XV, p. 90. *Crit. Rev.* May, 1756, I, p. 374.

⁸⁰*An impartial Estimate of the Rev. Mr. Upton's notes on the Fairy Queen*, reviewed in *Crit. Rev.* VIII, p. 82 ff.

⁸¹*Crit. Rev.* VII, p. 106.

⁸²H. E. Cory, : *Op. cit.*, pp. 149-50.

Spenser's position as the poet's poet was established with the new school. He was no longer regarded judiciously as an admirable poet who unfortunately chose inferior models for verse and fable with which to present his moral; he was enthusiastically adopted as an inexhaustible source of poetic inspiration, of imagination, of charming imagery, of rich colour, of elusive mystery, of melodious verse.

Although Warton's pseudo-classical contemporaries did not perceive the full significance of his study of Spenser, his general programme began to be accepted and followed; and his encouragement of the study of mediæval institutions and literature gave a great impetus to the new romantic movement. His followers were, however, often credited with the originality of their master, and their work was apt to arouse stronger protest from the pseudo-classicists.⁸³ When Hurd's very romantic *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* appeared, they were credited with having influenced Warton to greater tolerance of romance and chivalry.⁸⁴ This unjust conclusion was derived no doubt from the tone of greater confidence that Hurd was able to assume. Following both the Wartons, he sharpened the distinction between the prevailing pseudo-classical school of poetry and what he called the Gothic; insisted upon the independence of its standards; and even maintained the superiority

⁸³While even Dr. Johnson had only praise for the *Observations*, Joseph Warton's *Essay on Pope*, on the whole a less revolutionary piece of criticism, touched a more sensitive point. He found the essay instructive, and recommended it as a 'just specimen of literary moderation.' Johnson's *Works*, ed. 1825, V, p. 670. But as an attack on the reputation of the favourite Augustan poet, its drift was evident, and pernicious. This heresy was for him an explanation of Warton's delay in continuing it. 'I suppose he finds himself a little disappointed, in not having been able to persuade the world to be of his opinion as to Pope.' Boswell's *Johnson*, I, p. 448.

⁸⁴*Crit. Rev.* XVI, p. 220. It is perfectly evident however that the debt does not lie on that side. Hurd's *Letters* and the second edition of the *Observations* appeared in the same year, which would almost conclusively preclude any borrowings from the first for the second. But Warton's first edition, eight years before, had enough of chivalry and romance to kindle a mind in sympathy. Hurd was a less thorough student of the old romances themselves than Warton was. He seems to have known them through a French work, probably Sainte Palaye's *Memoires sur l'Ancienne Chevalerie* (1750), for he said, 'Not that I shall make a merit with you in having perused these barbarous volumes myself. . . . Thanks to the curiosity of certain painful collectors, this knowledge may be obtained at a cheaper rate. And I think it sufficient to refer you to a learned and very elaborate memoir of a French writer.' *Letters on Chivalry and Romance*. Letter IV, Hurd's *Works*, ed. 1811, IV, p. 260. Warton also knew this French work (Ste. Palaye's at least) and quoted from it, *Observations*, I, p. 76, and frequently in his *History of English Poetry*.

of its subjects.⁸⁵ In all this however he made no real departure from Warton, the difference being one of emphasis; Hurd gave an important impetus to the movement his master had begun. But with all his modernity, his admiration for the growing school of imaginative poets, he lacked Warton's faith in his school; he had no forward view, but looked back on the past with regret, and toward the future without hope.⁸⁶

On the side of pure literary criticism Warton's first and most important follower was his elder brother, Joseph, whose *Essay on Pope* was a further application of his critical theories to the reigning favourite. This very remarkable book was the first extensive and serious attack upon Pope's supremacy as a poet, and it is credited with two very important contributions to the romantic movement: the overthrow of Pope and his school; and the substitution of new models, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, and the modern school;⁸⁷ it contained the first explicit statement of the new poetic theories.⁸⁸

⁸⁵'May there not be something in the *Gothic* Romance peculiarly suited to the views of a genius, and to the ends of poetry?' Hurd, IV, p. 239. 'Under this idea then of a Gothic, not classical poem, the *Fairy Queen* is to be read and criticized.' IV, p. 292. 'So far as the heroic and *Gothic* manners are the same, the pictures of each, . . . must be equally entertaining. But I go further, and maintain that the circumstances, in which they differ, are clearly to the advantage of the *Gothic* designers . . . ' could Homer 'have seen . . . the manners of the feudal ages, I make no doubt but he would certainly have preferred the latter,' because of "*the improved gallantry of the Gothic Knights; and the superior solemnity of their superstitions*.'" IV, p. 280.

⁸⁶Hurd's *Letters*, IV, p. 350.

⁸⁷Joseph Warton placed Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, 'our only three sublime and pathetic poets,' in the first class, at the head of English poets. The object of the essay was to determine Pope's place in the list. 'I revere the memory of POPE,' he said, 'I respect and honour his abilities; but I do not think him at the head of his profession. In other words, in that species of poetry wherein POPE excelled, he is superior to all mankind; and I only say, that this species of poetry is not the most excellent one of the art.' Dedication, pp. i-ii. 'The sublime and pathetic are the two chief nerves of all genuine poetry. What is there transcendently sublime or pathetic in POPE?' Ded., p. vi. After a careful examination of all Pope's works Joseph Warton assigned him the highest place in the second class, below Milton and above Dryden. He was given a place above other modern English poets because of the 'excellencies of his works *in general*, and *taken all together*; for there are *parts* and *passages* in other modern authors, in *Young* and in *Thomson*, for instance, equal to any of POPE, and he has written nothing in a strain so truly sublime, as the *Bard of Gray*.' II, p. 405. References are to the fifth edition, 2 vols. 1806.

⁸⁸The first volume of Joseph Warton's *Essay on Pope* appeared in 1756, two years after the *Observations*. Though its iconoclasm was more apparent, the later essay made little advance in the way of new theory upon the earlier one, and there is rather more of hedging in the discussion of Pope than in that of Spenser.

Warton's *Observations on the Faerie Queene* thus wrought so great and so salutary a change in literary criticism that it is hardly possible to exaggerate its importance. Here first the historical method was appreciated and extensively employed. Here first the pseudo-classicism of the age of Pope was exposed. Here first is maintained a nice and difficult balance between classical and romantic criticism: without underestimating the influence of classical literature upon the development of English poetry, Warton first insisted that due attention be paid the neglected literature of the Middle Ages, which with quite independent but equally legitimate traditions contributed richly not only to the poetry of Spenser but to all great poetry since. His strength lies in the solidity and the inclusiveness of his critical principles. Without being carried away by romantic enthusiasm to disregard the classics, he saw and accounted for a difference between modern and ancient poetry and adapted his criticism to poetry as he found it instead of trying to conform poetry to rules which were foreign to it. This new criticism exposed the fatal weakness in the prevailing pseudo-classical poetry and criticism; it showed the folly of judging either single poems or national literatures as independent and detached, and the necessity of considering them in relation to the national life and literature to which they belong. Thus Warton's freedom from prejudice and preconceived standards, his interest in the human being who writes poetry, and the influences both social and literary which surround him, his—for that day—extraordinary knowledge of all those conditions, enabled him to become the founder of a new school of criticism.

CHAPTER IV

ACADEMIC LIFE. 1747-1772

Warton had not intended to have done with Spenser when he published his criticism of the *Faerie Queene*, but purposed to follow it with a similar treatment of the shorter poems. His own copy of Spenser's works, the wide margins of which he covered with notes of all sorts,—glosses, comparisons with other poems, references to romances, illustrative and interpretive comments,—show that he carried out this plan for many of the poems. But tutorial duties hindered; he permitted his interest to be diverted to other matters, and the work went no further. Dr. Johnson's letters to him during the winter following the publication of the *Observations* show that he was urging him to the completion of work which he perceived was languishing. In November he wrote, 'I am glad of your hindrance in your Spenserian design,¹ yet I would not have it delayed. Three hours a day stolen from sleep and amusement will produce it.'² No one knew better than Dr. Johnson the temptations to procrastinate; therefore he wrote again with anxiety on the same subject:— 'Where hangs the new volume? Can I help? Let not the past labour be lost, for want of a little more: but snatch what time you can from the Hall, and the pupils, and the coffee-house, and the parks, and complete your design.'³

Although Warton abandoned this project of making a complete commentary on Spenser's works, he undertook to prepare a second edition of the *Observations*, in which he made some additions and corrections, but no material changes. When Percy undertook seriously to publish a collection of old ballads, he promptly engaged Warton's interest and assistance by sending him a few ballads, including the *Boy and the Mantle*, the source of Spenser's conceit of Florimel's girdle. Warton was delighted with Percy's plan and with the suggestion for the improvement of his own work, and wrote to Percy, 'The old Ballads are extremely curious, & I heartily wish you success in your intended publication.

¹" 'Of publishing a volume of observations on the best of Spenser's works. It was hindered by my taking pupils in this College.' Warton." Boswell's *Johnson*, ed. cit., I, p. 276, note.

²Nov. 28, 1754. *Ibid.*

³Feb. 4, 1754, *Ibid.*, p. 279.

Spenser certainly had the *Boy & the Mantle* in view. I must beg leave to keep them all a little time longer as they will much enrich & illustrate a new edition of that work which you are pleased to place in so favourable a Light. It is already in the Press.⁴ He was careful, however, not to anticipate Percy's scheme by publishing extracts from the ballads and romances, and explained in his next letter: 'My Design is to give abstracts only of what you have sent me.'⁵ At the same time he expressed his appreciation of the 'ingenious Remarks on my book, which I receive as useful hints for the improvement of my new Edition.'⁶

Warton immediately busied himself helping Percy with his new plan. But at the same time he asked that Percy's and Lye's further remarks on his own work be sent 'in a Post or two, as we go on very quickly at Press, & I can insert them in the *last Section*,' adding, 'Indeed I am much obliged to you for what you have already communicated, & the kind offer you make, in your last, of searching the libraries of your neighbourhood, to assist me in any future pursuit'.⁷ His next letter, written during the following summer, announced 'Spenser' as 'just ready for publication,'⁸ and it immediately appeared.

Somewhat earlier, perhaps even before the publication of the *Observations on the Faerie Queene*, Warton was at work on a translation of Apollonius Rhodius,⁹ but, although Johnson urged him to continue it¹⁰ as he had urged him to complete the observations on Spenser,—he seems to have had both of them under way at the same time,¹¹—it met the same fate. It seems to have been regarded for some time rather as a work deferred than abandoned, for in 1770 Dr. Barnard wrote him in

⁴Trin. Coll. Oxon. Jun. 19, 1761, Warton MSS. in Harvard College Library, fol. 2.

⁵Jul. 11, 1761, same MSS. fol. 4.

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷Nov. 23, 1761, same MSS. fol. 6.

⁸Jul. 17, 1762, same MSS. fol. 9.

⁹Among the Warton papers in Trinity College Library, Oxford, is a small notebook of notes upon Apollonius and a synopsis of the *Argonautica*. See also Mant, *Op. cit.*, p. xxxiv. Mant's informant thought a translation of Homer was also intended. 'Thomas Warton, January 21, 1752, agreed to translate the *Argonautics* of Apollonius Rhodius for 80 pounds.' *Willis's Current Notes*, Nov. 1854, p. 90. See also Boswell's *Johnson*, I, p. 289, note.

¹⁰May 13, 1755. 'How goes Apollonius? Don't let him be forgotten. Some things of this kind must be done, to keep us up.' *Ibid.*

¹¹See Wooll, *Op. cit.*, p. 225.

¹²Dr. Jeffrey Ekins. Evidently the reply was satisfactory, for the next year, 1771, his *Loves of Medea and Jason*; . . . translated from the Greek of Apollonius Rhodius's *Argonautics* was published.

behalf of a friend of his¹¹ to know whether or not he had definitely given up the project.

After the completion of the second edition of Spenser, Warton's researches in English literature were somewhat vicarious, although no doubt his efforts in Percy's behalf were of some value to his collections for the history of poetry. His previous studies in early English poetry for the *Observations* made him invaluable to Percy in the extensive projects which he undertook with remarkable susceptibility to the growing interest of his age in the older poetry. Percy's first undertakings of this sort, the editions of Buckingham¹² and of Surrey,¹³—which how-

¹²An edition of the Works of George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, with an account of his Life . . . and a new key to the *Rehearsal*, was agreed upon between Percy and Tonson, June 12, 1761 and most of it then printed; it was resumed in 1795, but never completed. (See Nichols: *Lit. Illus.* VI, p. 556, *Lit. Anec.* III, p. 161, note, and *Arber Reprints*, XIII, introd.) I print all the extracts from Warton's letters to Percy relative to this undertaking as they partly show the nature and extent of Warton's help.

'The Pieces of Buckingham &c, which you mention, are not in the Bodleian; nor is there any circumstance relating to the Duke in Aubrey's Papers.' Jun. 19, 1761 (Harv. MSS. fol. 2). 'I have looked over the Letter to Osborne [?] in the Bodleian, & find no striking marks of Buckingham; nor, upon the whole, do I think it written by him. If I hear of those Editions of the *Rehearsal* you mention, I will let you know.' Oxon. Nov. 23, 1761 (same MSS. fol. 6). 'At my Return to Oxford, which will be about the tenth of next October, I will carefully transcribe the MSS. you mention relating to Buckingham.' Winchester, Sept. 4, 1762 (same MSS. fol. 11). 'You shall receive a copy of the *D. of Buckingham's MSS.* with the rest. . . I imagine you must know, that B. . . [?] in the Strand, lately published a *Catalogue of the D. of Buckingham's Pictures; with his Life by Brian Fairfax never before printed.*' What sort of a thing it is I know not.' Oxon. Nov. 5, 1762, (same MSS. fol. 14). 'Next week you will receive MSS. *D. Buckingham.*' Oxon. Nov. 12, 1762 (same MSS. fol. 15). 'I presume you know there is a *Life of Buckingham* in the last new volume of the *Biographia.*' Oxon. Mar. 14, 1763 (same MSS. fol. 22).

¹³The edition of Surrey was agreed upon with Tonson Mar. 24, 1763, and was printed in one volume, but was similarly delayed, and nearly the whole impression was destroyed by fire in 1808. (*Lit. Illus.* VI, p. 560). Only four copies are known to have survived, but these probably do not include the copy mentioned in Warton's letter of Feb. 26, 1767, below, which Percy had sent to him, and which was sold with the rest of Warton's library. See *A Catalogue of books*, [being the libraries of Dr. Joseph Warton, Thomas Warton . . . and others] *to be sold by Thomas Payne*, London, 1807.

As before I print extracts from Warton's letters to Percy referring to this work.

'I have found out . . . *Ld. Surrey's blank verse Translation*, but fear I shall

a. 1758, with advertisement, by Horace Walpole. See ed. of *The Rehearsal* in the *Arber Reprints*, vol. XIII, and *Dict. Nat. Biog.* art. Villiers.

ever were never published—Warton encouraged and assisted as much as possible by searching for editions, and securing transcripts, and urging the continuation of the work when he perceived it to be languishing. He probably helped little with the proposed edition of the *Spectator*,¹⁴ although he was interested in it.¹⁵ His help was, of course, most valuable in the preparation of Percy's folio manuscript of old poems for

not be able to transmitt them to you while I stay in town. I will however leave directions about it.' London, Jan. 1, 1763 (Harv. MSS. as above, fol. 20).

'I must beg your Patience for . . . Surrey a little longer.' London, Jan. 9, 1763 (same MSS. fol. 21). 'By Mr. Garrick's and Dr. Hoadly's Interest, I have procured, and have now in my hands, Surrey's Translation into blank verse of the second & fourth books of the *Æneid*, for Tottel, 1557. It is a most curious specimen of early blank verse, & will prove a valuable Restoration to Lord Surrey's Works. It belongs to a Mr. Warner of London, who is a great black-letter Critic. How shall I send it to you?' Oxon. Mar. 14, 1763 (Same MSS. fol. 22). 'If you prosecute the Edition of Surrey's Poems, I shall be happy to be employed in sending you all the assistance which our Oxford Repositories afford.' Trin. Coll. Dec. 5, 1764 (Same MSS. fol. 29). 'The Edition of Surrey, 1557, I know not where to borrow.' Oxon. Jun. 15, 1765 (Same MSS. fol. 30).

'Can I be of any further assistance in the new edition of antient Songs, or of Lord Surrey? . . . I beg a sight of what is printed of Surrey as soon as you conveniently can send it.' Oxon. Nov. 29, 1766 (Same MSS. fol. 28).

'I like your Text of Surrey very much; and shall be extremely glad to see your Notes and Life. I hope, they are in Forwardness. If you intend a Table of various Readings, I could gett Collections of the Bodleian Copies.' Trin. Coll. Oxon. Feb. 26, 1767 (Same MSS. fol. 31).

'I despair of finding any Editions of Surrey in the private Libraries; but will however examine the Catalogues.' Trin. Coll. Oxon. Apr. 21, 1767 (Same MSS. fol. 32).

'I have lately had a Letter from Dr. Hoadly, by whose means I lent you an Edition of *Surrey* belonging to Mr. Warner. It seems Mr. Warner wants the Book, for a work he has now in hand; and would be extremely glad if you would return it to him at Woodford Row, Essex, or Will's Coffee house Lincolns inn fields. When he has done with it, he will return it to you again. He does not mean to keep it long. I think I likewise lent you a book of Dr. Hoadly's, *Surry's Translation of part of Virgil*. At your Leisure you may return that to me next October at Oxford. You will excuse me for mentioning these Particulars. But Dr. Hoadly desired me to write to you on the Subject.' Winton. Sept. 13, 1770 (Same MSS. fol. 38).

¹⁴See letters to Tonson and agreement with him, 1764, *Lit. Illus.* VI, pp. 557 ff.

¹⁵The following communication to Percy was obviously not his first upon the subject. 'I have mentioned your Scheme of the *Spectators*, &c. to my brother and Dr. Hoadly long since; but will remember to renew my applications, in the most effectual way, when I see them next long vacation.' Oxon. Jun. 15, 1765 (Same MSS. fol. 30).

publication. One of the first scholars to whom Percy appealed for approval and help with this project, Warton was indefatigable in his efforts to assist, ransacking the Oxford libraries,¹⁶ his own collections and those of his friends, comparing manuscript and other versions of the poems,¹⁷ looking up additions to the collection and to the notes,¹⁸ and

¹⁶They however yielded little at first: 'We have nothing, as I recollect, in our Libraries which will contribute to your Scheme.' Trin. Coll. Oxon. Jun. 19, 1761 (Same MSS. fol. 2). 'Was there any thing in our public or private Libraries which would contribute to your scheme, I would transcribe & transmitt them with pleasure. But I am sorry to say that we are totally destitute of Treasures of this sort.' Jul. 11, 1761 (Same, fol. 4).

¹⁷For example, for the three ballads relating to Guy of Warwick, of which Percy published only *Guy & Amarant* and *The Legend of Sir Guy*, based upon *Guy & Phillis* in the original, Warton furnished the following pretty correct data: 'I know of no MSS. poem of Guy. I am however of opinion, that the Piece, of which you sent me a specimen, is probably Phillips's; as the style is agreeable to his age, & the composition not bad. I have some notion that I once saw a Poem called *Guy Earl of Warwick* in the *Harleian Miscellany*; but I can't be positive. Among Wood's Codd. impress. in Mus. Ashmol. is a Poem called "*The Famous History of Guy Earl of Warwick*," by Sam: Rowlands, 1649. It is a Mighty poor thing, & certainly different from your Specimen. I know of no copy of the Harl. Miscell. here; otherwise I would consult it for you.' Oxon Jul. 17, 1762 (same, fol. 9). Warton's memory, to which he trusted for much of the next communication, was somewhat at fault, for he confuses Rowland's modern version with some fragments found in the cover of an old book by Sir Thomas Phillips (See Hale's and Furnivall's ed. of the Percy Folio MSS. II, p. 510). 'When I told' you, in my Last, that the Poem on Guy is *probably Phillips's*, I fancy I meant a Phillips, who, as I think I told you in the same Letter, wrote a Poem in the year 1649, or thereabouts, on Guy. I think now this was my meaning; for when I wrote to you that account of Guy, I copied it from a memorandum in one of my Pocket-books. When I am at Oxford I can settle this matter. In the same Pocket book, I recollect I had likewise entered, *See the Harl. Miscell. for Guy*. The Pocket-book is at Oxford.' Winchester, Sept. 4, 1762 (same, fol. 11). Later he added, 'I don't think *Guy & Amarant* any Part of Rowland's Poem,' but examination showed that Percy's 'stanzas of *Guy and Amarant* [were] *literally* taken from Rowlands's said poem.' Trin. Coll. Oxon. Nov. 5 and 12, 1762 (same, fols. 14, and 15).

¹⁸For example, *King Ryence's Challenge*, which was not in the folio, having been referred to in the *Observations on the Faerie Queene* as a ballad found in *Morte Arthur* (ed. cit. I, p. 36), Warton was called upon to supply a copy of it, and sent the following information, most of which appears in Percy's notes (*Reliques*, ed. Wheatley, London, 1891, III, p. 24 ff.). 'You will find the ballad, of which I quote a Piece, in *P. Enderbury's* [Enderbie] *Cambria Triumphans*. pag. 197. It is not in my edition of *Morte Arthur*, which evidently is the same as your's. I presume it is in the older Editions, from whence the author quoted by

trying by every means to encourage the completion of an undertaking¹⁹ so important for the 'revival of the study of antient English Literature.'

Warton, who probably was ignorant of the liberties Percy was taking with the manuscript in his possession, made no objection to the introduction of modern imitations of old poems based upon old stories.

me, pag. 24, probably took it. . . . Enderbury [ut supra] was lent me by a clergyman in Hants; whither I am going in a few Days for the long vacation; & will from thence send you the Song.' Trin. Coll. Oxon. Jul. 11, 1761 (same, fol. 4). 'I have collated the Ballad in Enderbie with the MSS. inserted in the Bodleian *Morte Arthur*, & with the printed copy of it in the *Letter* describing Q. Elizabeth's *Entertainment at Kenilworth*; & here send you the various Readings in *Both*. From the Title to the MSS Copy, it is plain that this Ballad is not very old. I should judge, with you, that the *story* only was taken from M. Arthur, was it not for the passage, immediately following, in the *Letter*. By which one would suspect, that it was printed in some editions of M. Arthur. At least we may conclude from *thence*, that it was not occasionally composed for the Kenilworth festivities. My mistake in quoting it as a ballad in M. Arthur, arose from my finding it written into the Bodleian copy, in the place, as I imagined, of a Leaf torn out: for there are no pages in that Edition. This supposition was strengthened by the mention of this ballad in the *Letter*.' Trin. Coll. Oxon. Nov. 23, 1761 (same, fol. 6). 'I find a copy of *K. Ryence's Challenge* in an old Miscellany of time of Charles I. But as you have given so correct a copy of this piece, it will be of no service, unless you chuse to mention it in your Preface.' London, Jan. 1, 1763 (same, fol. 20). Percy, however, paid no heed to Warton's last suggestion and says that the ballad was composed for the festivities at Kenilworth (*Reliques*, ed. cit. III, p. 24).

Two other additional poems, not found in the folio, in the preparation of which Warton had a share are *King Cophetua & the Beggar Maid* and *King Edward & the Tanner of Tamworth*. With reference to a copy of the first, Warton wrote: '*The King & the Beggar* which you send me (which I see is from the little 12mo Collection of Songs in 3 vols) is quite different from Johnson's in the *Crowne Garland*. The Bodleyan is shut up on account of its annual visitation. It will be open on Tuesday, when I will begin the transcript.' And then he corrected himself in the same letter, 'I think, & am pretty sure, that your initial *Stanza* of the *King & Beggar* in your letter, is the same as Johnson's in the *Crowne-Garland*. But this I shall ascertain when the Library is opened,' and later he sent the transcript of it from that collection. Nov. 5 and 12, 1762 (fols. 14 and 15). See also *Reliques*.

After promising a transcript of the ballad, Warton wrote, 'On Examination, the *King & the Tanner* appears to be imperfect by the last Line *only*, which was carelessly pared off in the Bind [ery. It (MS. torn)] is mentioned somewhere, I cannot recollect exactly where, by Hea[rn]'. Nov. 12, 1762. An extract from Hearn's *Account of Some Antiquities in & about Oxford* was sent in a letter of Jan. 9, 1763, but it pertained to Heywood's play, *The first & second parts of King Edward the Fourth, containing the Tanner of Tamworth*, etc, 1613 and not *The*

He said of Percy's *Valentine and Ursine*, a poem suggested by *The Emperour & the Childe* in the original manuscript, which Percy rejected on the pretense that it was 'in a wretched corrupt state, unworthy the press':²⁰ The 'Story is fine & to me perfectly new, as it is many years since I read the old History of *Valentine and Orson*, on which I presume it is partly founded.'²¹ *The Birth of St. George*, admittedly taken from the *Seven Champions of Christendom* and 'for the most part modern', won from him the praise of being 'most poetically handled.'²² And before the completion of the work he explicitly approved the inclusion of specimens of rare poems of later date than the ballads: 'I perceive, by the proofs, that you give specimens of our elder Poets. This is a good Improvement of the Scheme.'²³ For this purpose he sent Gascoigne's *Ode on Ladie Bridges*,²⁴ offered a transcript of *The King's Quair*,²⁵ and traced 'the pretty pastoral song of *Phillida & Corydon*' to *Merrie, pleasant, & delectable historie betweene K. Edward IV & a Tanner of Tamworth*, etc. 1596 (also in the Bodleian), from which Warton's transcript was no doubt taken. (fol. 20).

Warton's familiarity with the early poetry enabled him to send a note on the reference to Robin Hood in *Piers Plowman*, "But I can rimes of Robin Hod, and Randall of Chester", Fol xxvi b. Crowley's edit. 1550', Mar. 31, 1764 (fol. 26).

¹⁹Upon receipt of at least a partial copy of the ballads Warton wrote to Percy, 'The old Ballads are extremely curious, & I heartily wish you success in your intended publication,' (Jun. 19, 1761, fol. 2), and the following year to some notes on various poems he added, 'How goes on the Collection of ancient Ballads? I hope we shall have it in the winter.' Winchester, Sept. 4, 1762 (fol. 11).

When the timid Percy sought the approval of 'men of learning and character' to 'serve as an amulet to guard him from every unfavourable censure, for having bestowed any attention on a parcel of old ballads', Warton was glad to lend his name. 'My name will receive honour in being mentioned before your elegant Work.' Winchester, Jul. 30, 1764 (fol. 27). Six months later he inquired about its progress: 'I hope your Ballads are near Publication.' Dec. 5, 1764 (fol. 29).

²⁰*Reliques*, ed. cit. III, p. 265.

²¹Oxon. Nov. 21, 1762, Harvard MSS., fol. 16.

²²Oxford, Trin. Coll. Octob. 20, 1762, same MSS., fol. 12.

²³Winchester, Jul. 30, 1764, fol. 27.

²⁴It was promised in the letter of Sept. 4, 1762 (fol. 11), and in that of Nov. 21, he added the comment, 'I think you will like the little *ode of Gascoigne*.'

²⁵After a vain search for the 'Ballad of James I of Scotland' (fol. 15) for which Percy had given inaccurate references, Warton 'discovered the Poem of James I of Scotland, where you direct me in your last. It consists of near 100 pages in folio, closely written. It is a vision in long verse, in stanzas of seven lines. Shall you want a Transcript?' (Nov. 21, 1762, fol. 16). Percy rejected this poem, however, and printed instead some shorter verses of questionable authenticity. *Reliques*, ed. cit. II, p. 300.

England's Helicon' and 'the *Muses Library*, 1738'.²⁶

Percy was unsuccessful, however, in an effort to tempt Warton to contribute to the collection a poem of his own in the old style, although he entreated for a continuation of the *Squire's Tale*, in the conclusion of which he knew Warton was interested,²⁷ and he appealed to Warton's often expressed desire to improve English poetry by a revival of its former imaginative power.²⁸ In reply to Percy's flattering request, Warton admitted the attractiveness of the subject, but made no promise. 'I thank you for thinking me qualified to complete Chaucer's *Squire's Tale*,' he wrote. 'The Subject is so much in my own way, that I do assure you I should like to try my hand at it. You are certainly right in thinking that the Public ought to have their attention called to Poetry in new forms; to Poetry endued with new manners & new Images.'²⁹

On receipt of a presentation copy³⁰ of the finished work, Warton wrote enthusiastically to the editor:

After an excursion longer than usual, I returned to Oxford only last Night; otherwise I should have long since acknowledged the favour of your very valuable and agreeable Present. I think you have opened a new field of Poetry, and supplied many new and curious Materials for the history and Illustration of ancient English Literature. I have lately had a Letter from Mr. Walpole, who speaks in very high terms of your Publication. At Oxford it is a favourite Work; and, I doubt not, but it is equally popular in Town. I hope you are going on in the same Walk. I shall be happy to receive your future Commands.³¹

Two months later he was urging a second edition: 'I trust, the Taste

²⁶Nov. 12, 1762, fol. 15.

²⁷See *Observations on the Faerie Queene*, ed. cit. I, p. 211.

²⁸In a postscript to a letter of August 26, 1762, requesting various transcripts for 'our *Ancient Songs & Ballads*,' Percy wrote, 'Tho' I have trespassed on your patience so monstrously already, I cannot prevail on myself to close up the packet without mentioning a wish, which had long been uppermost in my heart: it is—that you would undertake to complete Chaucer's *Squire's Tale*. It would be a task worthy of your genius, and such as it is every way (I am persuaded) equal to. From some hints in your book, vol. I, p. 153, I conclude that *your Imagination has before now amused itself in inventing expedients to bring those promised adventures to an issue*. That pleasing cast of antiquity, which distinguished those beautiful poems of yours, in ye late Collections of Oxford Verses, & which gave them so great an advantage over all others, would be finely adapted to such an undertaking. And let me add, nothing would fix your fame upon a more solid basis, or be more likely to captivate the attention of the public, which seems to loath all the common forms of Poetry; & requires some new species to quicken its pall'd appetite.' Harv. MSS. fols. 10 and 10^a.

²⁹Winchester, Sept. 4, 1762, fol. 11.

³⁰Which was among the books catalogued for sale by Payne in 1801.

³¹Trin. Coll. Oxon., Apr. 29, 1765, Brit. Mus. Addit. MSS. no. 32329, fol. 28.

of the Public will call for a second Edition of your Ballads. Any Improvement that shall occur to me, I will gladly communicate."³²

At the same time that Percy was preparing his edition of the ballads, he evidently contemplated an edition of Spanish romances as an illustration to *Don Quixote*, but whether in conjunction with the *Reliques* or as a separate work, I cannot determine. At any rate Warton was informed of the project and wrote approvingly: 'I rejoyce at your collection of the Romances referred to in Don Quixote. It will be a most valuable & a most proper Illustration. Your Translation of the Metrical Pieces of Romances I hope you will likewise continue; and I thank you for your admirable specimen.'³³ As soon as he learned of this project he sent Percy a rare and valuable edition of Sepúlveda's *Cancionero de Romances*³⁴ and lamented that in the dispersal of Collins' library another valuable book, *El Vendarero Luego* [?],³⁵ had been lost. The most interesting point about Warton's connection with this project is the evidence it gives of his first-hand acquaintance with the Spanish language and with at least a small portion of its literature.

Warton was immediately informed of Percy's next project, of publishing *The Household Book of the Earl of Northumberland in 1512 at his Castles of Wressle and Leconfield in Yorkshire*,³⁶ which was undertaken at the request of his patron, the Duke of Northumberland; and he at once appreciated its value and encouraged the plan. 'Your

³²Oxon. Jun. 15, 1765, Harv. MSS. fol. 30. Two other letters contain similar solicitations about the second edition, that of Nov. 29, 1766 (fol. 28), quoted above, and Apr. 21, 1767, 'When does the new Edition of the Ballads appear?' (fol. 32).

³³Sept. 4, 1762, fol. 11.

³⁴"Cancionero de Romances sacados de las coronicas de España con otros. compuestos por Lorenzo de Sepulveda. En Sevilla, 1584, 12mo." It is in the short Romance metre. It contains detached stories of the Feats of several Spanish Leaders &c. Among the rest, of the Cid, on whom Corneille formed his famous tragedy. If you have it not, I will find some method of conveying it to you after my Return to Oxford.' (*Ibid.*) Four years later he presented the *Cancionero* to Percy. (Fol. 28).

The rarity of this edition is attested by the fact that a recent bibliographer doubts its existence, but without sufficient cause. He says of it, 'Encuentro citada esta edición en la *Historia de la Literatura española* de Ticknor (I, 39, 4) No he logrado confirmar esta cita, que no se encuentra en ningun bibliógrafo . . . que tengo al menos por dudosa.' See Escudero y Perosso: *Tipografía Hispalense*, Madrid, 1894, art. 739.

³⁵Warton says of this, 'I remember my friend Collins used to look upon "El Vendarero &c" as the most curious & valuable book in his Collection. I think it was a thick quarto, in the short measure' (fol. 11a). I am unable to find any work of similar title in any Spanish bibliography.

³⁶Published in 1768.

Pacquett has given me high Entertainment', he wrote. 'It will be a most curious and valuable Publication. If you prefix a Preface, it will be worth while to introduce Leland's Description of the Castle of Wress-hill, which seems to have struck him in a particular manner; and which he describes more minutely and at length, than almost any thing else in his whole Itinerary. See Itin. Vol. 1. fol. 59, 60. I think I saw in Pembroke-Hall Library, at Cambridge, a copy of your manuscript. At least it was a Book of the same Kind. It was last summer; and Mr. Gray was consulting it, I suppose, for anecdotes of ancient Manners, so amusing to the Imagination. . . You may depend on the utmost secrecy.'³⁷ Warton probably made no real contributions to it, for he wrote the next year on receipt of the proof of the volume, 'Your Book never reached me in the Country (by means of the Carelessness of Bedmakers) till I had been a long while from Oxford, & at a time when I was full of Engagements, so as not to be able to sit down with a Pen in my Hand. I am now returned to Oxford, & fear it will be now too late for any Notes that may occur. Give me a Line on this Head.'³⁸

It was during this period that Warton's friendship with Dr. Johnson was at its height. Their friendship seems to have begun when the *Observations on the Faerie Queene* commanded the admiration of the great classical critic in spite of the reactionary character of its critical tenets. During the summer following their appearance, Johnson paid his first visit to Oxford since he had left the university more than twenty years before. He lodged on this visit at Kettel-Hall adjoining Trinity College, and Warton acted as his cicerone. He showed him the libraries—which Johnson had ostensibly come to Oxford to consult³⁹—and the doctor preferred the old Gothic hall at Trinity to the more commodious modern libraries, saying, 'Sir, if a man has a mind to *prance*, he must study at Christ-Church and All-Souls.'⁴⁰ Together they took long walks into the country about Oxford, viewed some of the ruins in the vicinity—the abbies of Oseney and Rewley—discussed Warton's favourite hobby, Gothic architecture, and agreed in their indignation at the havoc wrought by the reformation. They frequently visited Francis Wise, the Radclivian librarian, at Ellsfield, where Johnson busied himself with their host's library of 'books in Northern Literature,' and Wise read them his *History and Chronology of the fabulous Ages* which he was preparing to print.⁴¹ Both Warton and Wise were interested

³⁷Trin. Coll. Oxon. Jul. 25, 1767, Harv. MSS., fol. 33.

³⁸Oxon. Oct. 24, 1768, same, fol. 34.

³⁹Warton says that he collected nothing in the libraries for his dictionary although he stayed at Oxford five weeks. Boswell's *Johnson*, I, p. 270 and note.

⁴⁰*Ibid.* II, pp. 67-8, note.

⁴¹See Warton's account of this visit, *ibid.* I, p. 271, ff.

in getting the degree of Master of Arts bestowed upon Johnson that it might appear on the title page of the dictionary and be as great an honour to Oxford as to Johnson.⁴² Although the lexicographer came to Oxford at the beginning of the long vacation, he was so charmed with his visit and his host that he vowed if he came to live at Oxford, he would take up his abode at Trinity.⁴³ Besides mutual interest there was also a warm personal feeling between the two men; Johnson valued highly and eagerly sought the friendship of the younger man. Toward the close of the year, in one of his occasional fits of melancholy, intensified by a reminder of the loss of his wife, he wrote to Warton, 'I would endeavour, by the help of you and your brother, to supply the want of closer union, by friendship.'⁴⁴

Warton, however, although ready enough to serve Johnson in his work, was a negligent correspondent, and a busy, if not a somewhat offish, friend, and Johnson's letters are full of reproaches and complaints of his neglect: 'But why does my dear Mr. Warton tell me nothing of himself?'⁴⁵ 'Dear Mr. Warton, let me hear from you, and tell me something, I care not what, so I hear it but from you. . . I have a great mind to come to Oxford at Easter; but you will not invite me.'⁴⁶ 'You might write to me now and then, if you were good for any thing. But *honores mutant mores*. Professors forget their friends.'⁴⁷ Notwithstanding the less frequent correspondence, their literary friendship continued; Warton contributed three numbers to Johnson's *Idler* in 1758⁴⁸ and then and later collected notes for his edition of Shakespeare,⁴⁹ while Johnson planned to interest Warton in extensive schemes for antiquarian work which was beyond his own power to execute.⁵⁰ Their relations were very cordial in 1764 when Johnson again visited Oxford, and promised a longer visit 'after Xmas, when Shakespeare is completed,'⁵¹—a visit

⁴²Wooll, *Op. cit.* p. 228.

⁴³Boswell's *Johnson*, I, p. 272.

⁴⁴*Ibid.* I, p. 277.

⁴⁵Feb. 4, 1755, Boswell's *Johnson*, I, p. 279.

⁴⁶Mar. 20, 1755. *Ibid.* I, p. 283.

⁴⁷June 21, 1757. *Ibid.* I, p. 322.

⁴⁸Numbers 33, 93, and 96.

⁴⁹April 14, 1758, June 1, 1758, and June 23, 1770, Boswell's *Johnson*, I, pp. 335-6, 337, and II, pp. 114-5.

⁵⁰Oct. 27, 1757. This letter was probably never sent to Warton. Johnson's *Letters*, ed. Hill, I, pp. 73-4 and note.

⁵¹Warton to Percy, Dec. 5, 1764. 'We have had the Pleasure of Sam Johnson's company at Oxford, and I find he intends spending a long time with us after Xmas, when Shakespeare is completed.' (Harv. MSS. fol. 29.) Boswell has no mention of this visit to Oxford, nor have his editors noticed this letter.

which was no doubt deferred when the expected work was not ready till October. The friends probably met, however, at Winchester, for Dr. Johnson visited Dr. Warton there during the summer of 1765.⁵² When Johnson visited Oxford in 1769, he was exceedingly busy and far from well but eager to visit with Warton,⁵³ and in 1776 when he and Boswell together returned to Oxford, they spent an evening with Warton at Trinity.⁵⁴

At this time, however, and always, Warton's principal devotion was given to his university, and he refused none of her demands. On the occasions of public celebrations Warton seems to have been called upon frequently to play a worthy part. For the Encænna of 1751 he contributed an *Ode for Music*, which was performed at the Sheldonian Theatre. He was very busy with the Oxford *Collection on the Royal Nuptials* in 1761,⁵⁵ to which he contributed some verses *To her Majesty*,⁵⁶ and he superintended the collection on the birth of the Prince of Wales⁵⁷ the next year, to which he likewise contributed a poem.⁵⁸ At the time of the great Encænna in honour of peace in 1763, he was extremely busy.⁵⁹ The celebration lasted several days with eight speakers a day and formal dinners in honour of the distinguished guests at the various halls. In addition to preparing his own speech for the occasion, Warton, as major domo, had charge of the details,—‘the trouble I have had in preparation is infinite,’ he wrote his brother, ‘but hope all will be repaid if it goes off well, as I doubt not.’⁶⁰

Shortly after the *Observations* appeared, Warton entered with characteristic loyalty to his college into the preparation of a life of its

⁵²Wooll, *Op. cit.* p. 309.

⁵³May 31, 1769, Boswell's *Johnson*, II, p. 68 and note.

⁵⁴*Ibid.* II, p. 446.

⁵⁵Letter to Percy, Nov. 23, 1761, Harv. MSS. fol. 6a.

⁵⁶*On the Marriage of the King. To her Majesty.* See *Works*, ed. cit. I, p. 38.

⁵⁷‘I am much obliged to you for your good opinion of my poetical talents. Such as they are, they are at present employed on the Birth of the Prince; but this is nothing to the trouble and labour I have in overlooking & forming the whole collection.’ Octob. 20, 1762, Harv. MSS. fol. 12.

⁵⁸*On the Birth of the Prince of Wales*, (written after the Installation at Windsor, in the same year, 1762); see *Works*, I, p. 46.

⁵⁹He was also engaged with the Encænna of the preceding summer, when ‘the hurry of our Encænna at Oxford,’ was one of his excuses for delay in answering a letter to Percy. London, Dec. 22, 1763, Harv. MSS. fol. 23.

⁶⁰Wooll, *Op. cit.* p. 293. A good-natured but not very brilliant satire in imitation of earlier *Terra-Fillii*, published during the Encænna, was popularly ascribed to Warton (see *Lit. Anec.* VIII, 237), but it is probable that Warton, if he was connected with it at all, simply aided his friend Coleman, the real editor. See *Dict. Nat. Biog.* art. Coleman.

founder, Sir Thomas Pope, for the *Biographia Britannica*.⁶¹ A second antiquarian labour of love for the college was the life of Ralph Bathurst, one of the presidents of Trinity, prefixed to a selection from his works, published in 1761.⁶² Both of these biographies were compiled from manuscript materials, and were enlivened, especially the first, with digressions upon contemporary history. In 1772 Warton published separately an enlarged edition of his Life of Sir Thomas Pope,⁶³ and in 1780 another edition with further additions.⁶⁴

The value of the life of Pope as an important source of information for the period which it covers, because of the fresh manuscript material which was added to the successive editions, has now been seriously impugned by the discovery that some of the documents upon which it is based are fabrications. President Blakiston has shown⁶⁵ that quotations from *MSS. Cotton, Vitellius, F. 5*, that is, to Machyn's *Diary*, to which Warton says he gave a 'cursory Inspection'⁶⁶—sufficient to show him that some of the leaves had been burned but not that the manuscript was so nearly intact that no considerable sections could have been lost from it—and the few quotations from alleged transcripts from Machyn's *Diary* made by the annalist John Strype, are inaccurate. He has also proved that the transcriptions alleged to have been made by Francis Wise from copies of Machyn made by Strype before the fire and sent to Dr. Charlett, (designated by Warton as *MSS. Cotton, Vitellius, F. 5 MSS. Strype*), and from other manuscripts in Charlett's collections and from the family papers of Sir Henry Pope-Blount (designated as *MSS. F. Wise*) were made from no extant manuscripts, are corroborated by no

⁶¹*Or the Lives of the Most Eminent Persons who flourished in Great Britain and Ireland from the earliest Ages down to the present time*, etc. 1747-66. John Campbell, the largest contributor, to whom Warton sent his life of Pope, replied, 'I see, Sir, you have taken a great deal of pains in that life, of which, I will take all the care imaginable. . . . If you can think of any life that will be acceptable to yourself, or grateful to the University, I shall take care and hand it to the press with much satisfaction.' See Wooll, *Op. cit.* p. 241. Warton submitted a life of Weever, the antiquary, but it does not appear in the *Biographia*. *Ibid.* p. 263.

⁶²*The Life and Literary Remains of Ralph Bathurst, M.D. . . . President of Trinity College in Oxford*. . . . London, 1761.

⁶³*The Life of Sir Thomas Pope, Founder of Trinity College, Oxford. Chiefly compiled from Original Evidences. With an appendix of Papers never before printed*. London, 1772. Percy gave slight assistance by examining the will of Sir Thomas Audley in the Prerogative office, London. Warton's letters to Percy, Feb. 26 and April 21, 1767, Harvard MSS. fols. 31 and 32.

⁶⁴*The Second Edition, corrected and enlarged*. . . London, 1780.

⁶⁵H. E. D. Blakiston: *Thomas Warton and Machyn's Diary, English Historical Review*. XI, pp. 282-300.

⁶⁶*Life of Pope*, Preface, ed. 1780, p. xii.

other authorities, and are demonstrably false and misleading in some pretended facts. But Dr. Blakiston was not content with thus explaining the fabrications; he attempted to fix the blame for them upon Warton, and, as it seems to me, without sufficient justification. All of the positive facts of the case can be as easily explained upon the theory that the biographer himself was the victim of a clever but unscrupulous antiquary as upon the supposition that Warton was himself guilty of the fraud, for it is well known that he was habitually assisted by other antiquarians and friends whose contributions he accepted without verification. Dr. Blakiston, however, seems to think that when he can exonerate Wise by showing that the fabrications were added to the separate editions both published after his death, Warton is thereby proved guilty; the possibility of a third person being involved has not been given by him the consideration it deserves.

Most of Dr. Blakiston's reasons for fixing upon Warton are easily disposed of. That Warton's failure to detect the fabrications when they were offered him proves his guilt, is reasoning which almost equally convicts every author who has accepted these statements in Warton's history. That what Dr. Blakiston supposes the only extant material for the life of Pope among Warton's voluminous papers—a small note book—contains no reference to the disputed passages,⁶⁷ of course proves nothing. That the fabrications appeared gradually is, as Dr. Blakiston says, 'highly suspicious', but does not indicate whom one is to suspect. Two of his reasons⁶⁸ are more soundly based upon Warton's known faults of occasional inaccuracy of statement or quotation in some details of his extensive works. These faults would be more reprehensible even in an eighteenth century antiquary were it possible for his critics—from Ritson to Blakiston⁶⁹—to free themselves from it,—and they show how easy a victim he would become of a malicious practical joker.

Moreover, in the absence of conclusive evidence for so grave a charge, great weight must be given to the character of the accused. It must be shown that such a deception is quite in keeping with his character, that it is not only possible but probable that he was guilty of the forgery attributed to him. And such evidence is altogether wanting

⁶⁷Another book of notes upon the life of Pope, at Winchester College, likewise does not refer to the fabrications.

⁶⁸That he exaggerated the damage to the Machyn manuscript and printed fabrications of letters supposed to be in Trinity College Library. To the latter of course Warton had easy access, and he entirely personally consulted them; but it is nevertheless possible that transcripts were made by another and less veracious hand.

⁶⁹For example the first separate edition of the life of Pope was published in 1772, not 1770, as he says. His most serious blunder is discussed later.

in this case. It is a striking coincidence that Dr. Blakiston has selected as a principal reason for accusing Warton, as an alleged motive or suggestion for the deception, a circumstance that, on the contrary, furnishes a conspicuous proof of his honesty: namely, his connection with the Rowley-Chatterton forgeries. Warton, he says, 'was himself engaged about 1778, when he must have put the finishing touches to [some of the Pope fabrications], in defending the authenticity of the Rowley poems,' and he further suggests that Warton was tempted to make a similar experiment, in which, from his knowledge of early English literature, he was more likely to succeed than Wise, a 'mere antiquarian'.⁷⁰ As a matter of fact, in 1778, as well as in 1772 and 1782, Warton was engaged, not in defending the authenticity of the poems, but in rejecting them as spurious. Moreover his thoroughly honest conclusion in this matter is the more commendable and significant in this connection because it not only was reached in opposition to popular opinion, but was unwelcome to himself. In spite of his own inclination to credit Chatterton's tale, Warton was the first scholar who ventured to put himself on record as denying the authenticity of the poems. His openminded and scholarly treatment of the facts in this matter, in which some deference to personal bias might have been excused, seems to make improbable to the point of impossibility any deliberate tampering with facts in an historical treatise. When he gives such conspicuous evidence of openmindedness and candour in the treatment of this question, it is scarcely credible that he could be at the same time engaged in forging so gratuitous and useless a deception as the Strye forgeries.

From the time that Warton had taken his first degree in 1747, he had been a tutor in Trinity College, of which he became a fellow four years later, and he served his university as faithfully in this capacity as in more prominent ones. Although he did a remarkably large amount of literary and antiquarian work, he regarded himself rather as an Oxford don than as a man of letters. Although no one probably made better use of his academic leisure, he always put his collegiate duties first: the work upon Spenser was neglected and finally abandoned while

⁷⁰p. 299. Dr. Blakiston's source for this mistake is the *Dictionary of National Biography* article on Chatterton. It is unfortunate that in an attack on the accuracy of another historian he did not verify and thereby correct that very misleading mention of Warton's connection with the controversy by reference to the original documents, the second volume of the *History of English Poetry, 1778*, (pp. 139-164, and Emendations to p. 164) and Warton's *Enquiry into the Authenticity of the Poems attributed to Rowley, 1782*, in which he reviews his connection with it, pp. 1-6.

he devoted himself to his pupils;⁷¹ and at the special request of Lord North, who had been his contemporary at Trinity, he took his son under his special charge from 1774 to 1777, relinquishing his other pupils during that time,⁷² and neglecting somewhat his work upon the history of poetry. As a tutor he was at least popular, forming lasting and beneficial friendships with some of his pupils, with Topham Beauclerk and Bennet Langton, who came up to Oxford soon after the interruption of the Spenserian design, and with William Lisle Bowles, who had known Warton at Winchester and selected Trinity on his account, and upon whose poetry Warton exercised some influence.

As a professor Warton was more active in his earlier than in his later years. Lord Eldon, who was a member of University College from 1766 to 1773, says that 'poor Tom Warton' used to send to his pupils at the beginning of every term 'to know whether they would *wish* to attend lecture that term,'⁷³ but Mant lamented that in his later years when he was professor of history, he 'suffered the "rostrum to grow cold"'.⁷⁴ However, his strongest claim to the regius professorship of modern history was that he was willing to deliver the lectures which George III was aroused to demand while his rival wished to hold the appointment as a sinecure.

In 1757 Warton was elected by his university to succeed William Hawkins of Pembroke in the office which his father had formerly held, the professorship of poetry, and he was reëlected at the expiration of his first term of office in 1762. As poetry professor Warton devoted his lectures chiefly to recommending and expounding the beauties of classical poetry. One of these lectures, a Latin discourse on Greek pastoral poetry, was afterwards enlarged to serve as a prefatory discourse to his edition of Theocritus.⁷⁵ The Latin translations from Greek poems which were included in the last edition of his poetry were made and first used as illustrations of his subject in this course of lectures.⁷⁶ The most substantial outgrowth of his studies as poetry professor, however, was his editions of classical poetry. The first was a small edition of *Inscriptionum Romanarum Metricarum Delectus*,⁷⁶ a selection of inscriptions,

⁷¹*Supra*. A letter from his brother shows that he abandoned an important business trip to London with his brother during the long vacation in 1754 because of his duty to a pupil. See Wooll, p. 233, where the letter is misdated 1755. Joseph's removal to Tunworth, alluded to in the letter as imminent, was made in 1754.

⁷²Mant, *Op. cit.* pp. lxxiv-lxxv.

⁷³Boswell's *Johnson*, I, p. 279, note.

⁷⁴Mant, *Op. cit.* p. lxxxiv.

⁷⁵*Ibid.* p. xli.

⁷⁶1758.

chiefly sepulchral, from various other collections, and including a few modern epigrams, one by Dr. Jortin and five of his own on the classical model.⁷⁷ This edition, which, with characteristic indifference to fame, was published anonymously, was quite small and had so slight a popularity that twenty years after its publication it was almost unknown, and had become so rare that the author himself wanted a copy of it.⁷⁸

Contemporary opinion varied as to its merits. Shenstone called it 'rather too simple, even for my taste.'⁷⁹ George Coleman was more enthusiastic and wrote to the author, 'You know, I suppose, that the *Inscriptiones Romanae*, &c. are *your's*. They have, I find, been sent to all the literati, Dr. Markham, Bedingfield, Garrick, &c. They are very well spoken of; Markham in particular commended them much, and master Francklin is held mighty cheap for his very unclassical review of them.'⁸⁰ James Harris was no doubt referring to the same work when he wrote, 'Be pleas'd to accept my sincerest wishes for your truly laudable endeavours towards the revival, the preservation, and the encrease of good taste; not that phantom bearing its name, imported by Petit Maitres from France, but that real and animating form which guided the geniuses at Athens.'⁸¹ A similar work was a collection of Greek inscriptions, an edition of Cephalas's *Anthology*.⁸²

The great work of Warton's professorship was, however, the edition of Theocritus on which he was engaged at the time the *Inscriptionum* was published,⁸³ and for which he laid aside all other literary work,⁸⁴

⁷⁷Mant, p. xlii. The Latin epigrams are included in Mant's edition of Warton's poems, volume II.

⁷⁸See *Lit. Anec.*, VIII, p. 476 and III, p. 427.

⁷⁹Shenstone's *Works*, ed. 1777, III, p. 284.

⁸⁰Wooll, *Op. cit.* p. 258.

⁸¹*Ibid.* pp. 260-1.

⁸²1766.

⁸³Cowper to Gough, Nov. 26, 1758. 'You have heard (no doubt) that the Republic of Letters is in great expectation of a good edition of Theocritus from Mr. Warton, the Poetry Professor. His plan is, to give us a correct text, with critical and explanatory notes.' *Lit. Anec.* VIII, p. 562. In the preface to the *Anthology* the *Theocritus* was definitely promised, p. xxxvi. See also Wooll, p. 267.

⁸⁴Nov. 29, 1766 Warton wrote to Percy, 'The History of English Poetry is at present laid aside for the Publication of Theocritus, which is nearly finished;' (Harv. MSS. fol. 28) two years later the *Theocritus* was still occupying him although he was eager to be at the History. 'My Theocritus,' he wrote Oct. 24 1768, 'will soon be published; and when I am released [?] from that work, I hope to be able to make another Excursion into Fairy-Land.' Same MSS. fol. 34.

but which did not appear until 1770.⁸⁵ The fact that Theocritus had long been a favourite author with Warton⁸⁶ no doubt influenced the selection of that author, but the immediate cause was very likely the large collection of manuscripts which John St. Amand, a classical antiquary, had collected in Italy and elsewhere for a proposed edition of Theocritus and which he bequeathed to the Bodleian Library.⁸⁷ Warton also received assistance in the publication of *Theocritus* from Jonathan Toup, whom Warburton called the 'first Greek scholar in Europe'.⁸⁸ His principal contribution was an epistle on some of the Idyllia,⁸⁹ but he also sent a number of briefer notes.⁹⁰ Warton repaid Toup's kindness not only by contributions to the edition of Longinus which Toup was even at that time engaged upon,⁹¹ but by seeing it through the press.⁹² The edition of Theocritus was very highly praised

⁸⁵The editor confidently expected it two years earlier. See letter to Jonathan Toup, May 2, 1768. 'We are now printing the Notes of the XVth Idyllium; and as no sort of Interruption will intervene, the Work will be ready for Publication by or before Christmas next.' Bodleian Library, MSS. Clar. Pr. C. 13, f. 109.

⁸⁶Mant, p. xlv, and preface to Theocritus.

⁸⁷Mant, p. xlv. St. Amand died in 1754.

⁸⁸*Dict. Nat. Biog.* article Toup.

⁸⁹Printed at the end of Warton's notes.

⁹⁰Printed with Warton's.

Dear Sir

I have received the Note, which is very curious and ingenious. If you please, as we are not yet got to the *Dioscuri*, I will insert it in its proper place, with due Acknowledgement as coming from you; as I have all along done with those *detached* Notes you have sent me, not belonging to the *Epistola*.

I shall be extremely glad to hear from you as often as possible, & am, Dear Sir,
With great Truth, yrs. very sincerely,

Oxon. Mar. 30, 1768.

T. Warton.

Bodleian Library, MSS. Clar. Pr. C. 14, fol. 162.

⁹¹ 'The World is in great Expectation of your Longinus; & I should be glad if you could inform me, when we are likely to be favoured with so valuable an accession to Grecian Literature.' May 2, 1768, Clar. Pr. C. 13, f. 109.

⁹²No slight service, if we may judge from the following letter.

Dear Sir

In placing Rhunhinius's Notes *first*, we have acted according to your own Directions in a Letter which I inclose. If you mean to alter your first Design specified in this Letter, and to place your *own* Notes after the Text, two or three Sheets, (now worked off) must be cancelled. I have stopped the Press till I hear from you on this Particular. The Cancelling will be attended with some little Expence & Delay; but if you chose to have it done, I will propose it to the Board. I am, Dear Sir,

Your most affectionate

Trin. Coll. Feb. 4, 1777.

humble servt.

P. S. Please to return the Inclosed.

T. Warton.

Clar. Pr. 13, fol. 83. See also Wooll, pp. 318, 319, 364, and 377.

by Warton's friends upon its publication; Toup called it 'the best publication that ever came from the Clarendon Press';⁹³ but foreign scholars immediately discovered its defects in precision, and it has now been entirely superseded.⁹⁴

Almost immediately upon the expiration of his second term as professor of poetry, Warton began making attempts to secure the Professorship of Modern History, and Bishop Warburton was particularly active in his behalf. Before Warton's name was proposed,⁹⁵ however, the office had been awarded to Mr. Vivian, upon his agreeing to comply with the King's demand that it should no longer be held as a sinecure. A little more than a year later Vivian was very ill; the false rumour of his death revived the hopes of Warton's friends, and fresh efforts were made. The uncertainty as to whether or not Vivian would give up his pretensions to the office⁹⁶ and refuse to read lectures in conformity with the King's condition,⁹⁷ kept them in a continual excitement, in which Warton seems to have shared least of all. When finally the professorship was again settled upon Vivian, Warburton wrote in commendation of the manner in which he accepted the disappointment, at the same time assuring him that Vivian's health was sure to create a vacancy in the office soon.⁹⁸ Warton's delicacy, or indolence, was, however, greater than the Bishop of Gloucester's, and he delayed until Vivian was actually dead before approaching Grafton and North for his office. This, in the opinion of Warburton at least, cost him the office,⁹⁹ which went to

⁹³Mant, p. xliii.

⁹⁴*Dict. Nat. Biog.* Article Warton.

⁹⁵Wooll, *Op. cit.* pp. 337-8.

⁹⁶*Ibid.* p. 355.

⁹⁷Warburton to T. Warton, Feb. 15, 1770. . . 'It is as clear as the day that Vivian hangs on the professorship, in hopes that these distracted times, and a shifting Ministry, will throw it into his hands, without the burthen. Your only hope now is the steadiness of the K.'s purpose. . . If Vivian will read lectures as required, without doubt he will have the professorship. If he will not read, and declines the condition, and the King insists on the performance, you will have it. If the report of Vivian's death had been true, I had secured it for you.' Wooll, pp. 360-1.

⁹⁸*Ibid.* p. 363.

⁹⁹Warburton to Warton, March 13th, 1771. . . 'I take it for granted you was grown very indifferent to this professorship, or that you would have seen me on Sunday (I was only gone to the Chapel) that I might have wrote immediately to the D. of Grafton, who had actually got the thing for you of the King, in the supposition of the death of Vivian. That report proved false. So our labour was

Thomas Nowell,¹⁰⁰ who retained it until his death in 1801. This is the last university honour which Warton sought. In 1785 he was, however, elected Camden Professor of Ancient History in recognition of his merits and the honours he had conferred upon the university. Warton was not so active in the prosecution of his course in ancient history as he had been in that of poetry thirty years earlier, and he probably never delivered any lectures after his inaugural one.

to begin again. But as I now understand Vivian lay a dying for some time, that was the time when you should have begun your new application. You sat out, in every sense, too late. . . I believe I am more vexed and disappointed than you are: and not a little of my vexation falls upon yourself; or at least, would fall, if I did not think you must needs be very indifferent about the matter. Perhaps, all things considered, you may have good reason for being so.' Wooll, pp. 374-5.

¹⁰⁰Nowell seems to have been upon another occasion the successful applicant for an office sought by Warton. *Ibid.* p. 268.

CHAPTER V

THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH POETRY. VOLUME I, 1774.

THE TRIUMPH OF ROMANCE.

Before the expiration of his term as professor of poetry, Warton was again at work in the field of English literature, from which his interest had been only partly and temporarily distracted by his classical studies. He now began working seriously upon his *magnum opus*, the *History of English Poetry*. This work had no doubt been more or less definitely projected ever since his studies for the *Observations on the Faerie Queene* had shown him the possibilities of the subject and the large amount of material available for it; he had indeed partly foreshadowed it in a brief résumé of the subject in his first important work.

Two eighteenth century poets before Warton had undertaken to supply the need for a history of English poetry and had abandoned their attempts after doing little more than outline their projects. During the two preceding centuries a number of works dealing more or less directly with the subject had appeared,—discourses on English poetry with some account of the lives of the poets, and collections of lives of the famous men of England including the poets; the small number of such attempts is not so striking as the poor quality of even the best results. What passed in the seventeenth century for a history of poetry was a sort of miscellany or compendium of anecdotes of the lives of poets arranged alphabetically rather than chronologically, without historical perspective and with no critical value. The tradition of Philips, Winstanley and Langbaine was carried on in the eighteenth century by Jacob, Tanner and Cibber, whose 'dictionaries of Poets' differed scarcely at all from the catalogues from which they were copied.

Pope and Gray in their plans for a history of poetry, avoided this error by arranging their subjects into so-called 'schools' of poetry, a procedure of somewhat questionable wisdom in the absence of any chronological history of the subject. It remained for Warton therefore to attempt and to bring to an advanced stage of completion the first orderly history of English poetry, and thereby, in spite of the obvious imperfections of his work, to transform the growing curiosity of the eighteenth century antiquarian into the historical study of the nineteenth century scholar.

As early as 1765 Warton's plan had proceeded so far that he wrote to Percy, 'I think I have told you that I am writing *The History of English Poetry*, which has never yet been done at *large*, and in *form*. My Materials are almost ready.'¹ The following year, however, the work was laid aside for his edition of *Theocritus*² which occupied him longer than he anticipated. His letters to Percy show his eagerness to be at the more congenial work, in which Percy's interest and the success of his *Reliques* helped to encourage him: 'My Theocritus will soon be published; and when I am released [?] from that Work, I hope to be able to make another Excursion into Fairy-Land. My Encouragement is having such a Companion as you in my Rambles there.'³

As soon as it became known among Warton's friends that he was undertaking this important work, they were eager to help with it. Their assistance was graciously accepted and it considerably facilitated the stupendous undertaking. Farmer immediately offered a 'pretty large Spenserian packet' and later asked for a 'job on the History';⁴ Hurd engaged to get Gray's plan for comparison with his own and commended the 'noble design';⁵ Garrick not only eagerly offered the use of his valuable collection of old plays and romances, but even sent them down to Oxford to be used⁶—a favour which Dr. Johnson complained had not been granted him.⁷ Percy, eager to repay Warton's help with the ballads, became a valuable contributor,⁸ especially to the second volume; and Warton's Oxford friends, Price and Wise, besides many nameless helpers and emanuenses, helped with the compilations.

Warton spent many years collecting the materials for his history, a task incomparably more difficult than it now appears because of the virtual inaccessibility of old books and manuscripts. Manuscripts were

¹Oxon. Jun. 15, 1765, Harv. MSS. fol. 30.

²Nov. 29, 1766, *Ibid.* fol. 28.

³Oct. 24, 1768, *Ibid.* fol. 34.

⁴Letters of Nov. 19, 1766 and Feb. 13, 1770. Wooll, *Op. cit.* pp. 315, 359.

⁵Letter of Sept. 15, 1769. *Ibid.* pp. 348-9.

⁶Letter of June 29, 1769. *Ibid.* p. 346.

⁷*Preface to Shakespeare*, Johnson's *Works*, Lynam ed. V, p. 138.

⁸Warton was careful not to hinder Percy's plans for publication by a previous use of his material, and wrote; 'I shall be much obliged to you if you could send about 40 Lines, transcribed as a specimen, of *Sir Launfall*, written by Chester, temp. Hen. vi. Perhaps you intend that piece for publication: but such a Specimen would advertise your design; & I would mention your intention, with due acknowledgement & recommendation. But if this breaks in upon any scheme of your's, I dont ask it.' (Winchester, Sept. 28, 1769, Harv. MSS. fol. 36). Permission to publish was given, and Warton printed 42 lines from the beginning and 6 from the conclusion, with acknowledgement to Percy, in the second volume of his history, p 102, note.

widely scattered through cathedral and college libraries, private and public collections, the Bodleian Library and the then recently founded British Museum; moreover all such collections were very poorly catalogued, so that finding a wanted book or manuscript frequently meant actually ransacking a whole collection, and so little order prevailed among them that Warton complained that he was unable to find again a book that he had once consulted.⁹ Warton had the added difficulty as a pioneer that he had no training, little experience, and few examples in the use of manuscripts; he was unskilled in old hands, and had no exact knowledge of the early forms of the language. His tremendous energy and boundless enthusiasm for the task, however, enabled him to overcome these difficulties pretty successfully. It was his custom to make his notes as he could procure the material he needed; nothing that could be made to serve his purpose was overlooked; and he accumulated many volumes of manuscript copy-books of miscellaneous notes for his history¹⁰ before he began its actual composition. His vacations were partly devoted to his work. Upon his annual rambles he was on the look-out for literary as well as architectural treasures, and he was sometimes rewarded with a 'find' that would make a modern bibliophile green with envy. For example, he 'picked up . . . in a petty shop at Salisbury, where books, bacon, red-herring, and old iron were exposed to sale' a third edition of *Venus and Adonis*¹¹ 'bound up with many coeval small poets' into 'a Dutch-built but dwarfish volume.'¹²

He habitually spent his vacations with his brother at Winchester, and there he settled down to the actual composition of his history. There he had ample leisure and, if not the most favourable library facilities, at least the advantage of the sympathetic criticism of his most congenial friend, his brother.

By 1769 he had amassed nearly all of the material and the edition of *Theocritus* was so far out of the way that he expected to proceed rapidly with the history. 'I am sitting down in good Earnest to write the *History of English Poetry*', he wrote to Percy in July from Oxford.

⁹'I have searched in vain for Marlowe's *Dido* with the Elegy among Tanner's Books which are squeezed into a most incommodious room, covered with dust, unclassified, and without a catalogue. Such is the confused and impracticable State of this Collection, that I have often been unable to find a book a second time which I have seen not half a year before. . . . My friend Mr. Price of the Bodleian talks of a Catalogue to Tanner's Books, but I fear it is at a distance.' Letter to Edmund Malone, Jun. 22d, 1781, Brit. Mus. Addit. MSS. 30375, no. 1.

¹⁰Of which many are still to be seen in Trinity College Library, Oxford, and at Winchester College. The handwriting is very difficult, often really illegible.

¹¹1596. It is called the second by Malone, in the preface to his Shakespeare, p. lxii.

¹²Letter to Malone, Mar. 19, 1785, B. M. MSS. Add. 30375, no. 2.

'It will be a large work; but as variety of materials have been long collected, it will be soon completed.'¹³ At the close of his summer's work on it at Winchester he reported 'a very considerable progress in [his] work.'¹⁴ Early the following year Gray sent Warton, at Hurd's request, the sketch of his own plan for a similar work, which he had readily relinquished on hearing of Warton's project. Either because of modesty or indolence he sent no materials for the work, but only a short 'sketch of the division and arrangement of the subjects.' This included an introduction 'on the poetry of the *Galic*' and Gothic nations, and four principal parts: the School of Provence, Chaucer and his contemporaries, two later Italian schools and Spenser, and the French school introduced after the Restoration. The design, as he said, was partly taken from Pope's plan.¹⁵ Although Warton's first volume was by this time almost ready for the press, having been written according to his own different plan, he promptly acknowledged the merits of Gray's plan. At the same time he pointed out that he had followed a more strictly chronological division of the subject, interspersed with general views, 'as perhaps of a *particular species* of poetry &c. . . interwoven into the tenour of the work, without interrupting my historical series.'¹⁶

Warton's work with the history was now proceeding rapidly, though it was not, as Gray was told, already in the press at the time he sent Warton his plan. During the summer vacation at Winchester Warton made such progress that he wrote again to Percy, 'My *Opus Magnum* goes on swimmingly. We shall go to Press in October.'¹⁷ Another distracting interval delayed its progress, however, for four years longer. The final work was done at Winchester in the summer vacation of 1773. Immediately after his arrival Warton wrote to his friend Price, 'I am now recollecting my scattered Thoughts, & sitting down to complete the first volume of the *History of English Poetry*, which is to be published before next Christmas.'¹⁸

In the following year, 1774, the long-expected first volume appeared with this title: *The History of English Poetry, from the Close of the Eleventh to the Commencement of the Eighteenth Century. To*

¹³Trin. Coll. Oxon., Jul. 4, 1769. Harv. MSS. fol. 35.

¹⁴Winchester, Sep. 28, 1769. Same MSS. fol. 36. He added, 'your generous offer of any thing you have, gives me great Encouragement, & will be gratefully remembered.'

¹⁵Gray's letter of April 15, 1770 is given almost in full in Chalmers' *English Poets*, XVIII, pp. 79-80.

¹⁶Winchester College, Apr. 20, 1770, *Ibid.* p. 81.

¹⁷Winton. Sept. 13, 1770, Harv. MSS. fol. 38.

¹⁸Winton. Aug. 16, 1773, Bodleian MSS. Auto. d. 4, fol. 5.

which are prefixed Two Dissertations. I On the Origin of Romantic Fiction in Europe; II On the Introduction of Learning into England. An undated manuscript copy-book among the Warton papers in Trinity College Library contains a preliminary draft of Warton's plan for his history as far as the reign of Elizabeth, probably the first volume as originally planned. Subsequently he enlarged the plan, but without altering its chronological character; so that the inclusion of much more material lengthened his work considerably.

Plan of the History of English Poetry.

1. The Poetry subsisting among the Druids lost: The Saxons introduc'd it, of whom Hickes produces many Hymns: The old British Bards not yet lost: Robert of Gloster's Cronicle the Remains of them.

2. Pierce Plowman the first Allegorical Poem in our Tongue; which is half-Saxon as to Language; next Gower & Chaucer who went abroad & brought back with them the Learning of France & Italy (which consisted chiefly of Provencall Fictions) to enrich our tongue; so that the old British (or rather mixt Saxon) made way for foreign Terms: But Poetry received a considerable Improvement from Lydgate, who is the first English Poet we can read without hesitation.

3. The Allegoric & inventive Vein seem'd in a little time to be lost, & John Harding, a Cronicler in Rhyme brought back, as it were the Rudeness of Robert of Gloucester: But that bad Taste did not reign long; for S. Hawes soon restor'd Invention, & improved our Versification to a surprising Degree. After him appear'd Alex. Barclay, whom Hawes is yet superior to, in Language &c.

4. But, now Henry 8. being King, Learning appear'd with new Lustre & his may be called the first classical age of this country. Notwithstanding which, Skelton is nothing considerable. Yet soon after this Poetry took a new Turn, in the writings of Wyatt & Surrey; who travelled into Italy: & these are the very first that give us the sketch or shadow of any polish'd Verse.

5. A fine Harvest of Poësy now shew'd itself in Q. Elizabeth's reign.

In preferring a more nearly chronological arrangement to an arbitrary classification of poets, Warton believed that he sacrificed only artificial arrangement for 'clearness and fulness of information.' He objected that 'the constraint imposed by a mechanical attention to this distribution, appeared . . . to destroy that free exertion of research with which such a history ought to be executed, and not easily reconcileable with that complication, variety, and extent of materials, which it ought to comprehend.'¹⁹ In fact his eagerness to acquaint his readers with the little-known periods of early English literature by means of frequent citations and full details was at the same time his strength and his weakness. The value and importance of his copious selections from long-neglected poems are not immediately apparent to readers of the

¹⁹*Hist. Eng. Poetry*. Preface, p. v. References are to the second edition of vol. I, 1775.

present age, to whom practically all of English literature is readily accessible in editions adapted to every degree of scholarship or the lack of it. It is a commonplace of literary history that the early eighteenth century was hopelessly ignorant of even of the most obvious facts in the history of poetry, so that the greatest poets were almost grotesquely represented upon a dismal background of ignorance and barbarism, while refined poetry was conceived as beginning with Mr. Waller. By his wealth of detail and by his historical method therefore Warton completed in his history of poetry the revolution of criticism that he had begun in his *Observations on the Faerie Queene*; what he had done for Spenser, he enabled other critics to do for other poets by putting the wealth of England's poetical past within their reach.

However, although Warton planned his history excellently, his literary antiquarianism, his love for the details of his subject, at times betrayed him. The historian permitted himself to be enticed from the logical development of his subject into all sorts of digressions and parenthetical discussions, sometimes of great length. These aberrations, interesting as many of them are in themselves, do indeed destroy the proportions of the work and obscure the outlines of what was really a well-planned history. Classical scholar though he was, Warton lacked the Greek sense of proportion and form, and his great work has far less of the simplicity of the classics than of the rich bewilderment of his favourite romances. In nothing is his 'romanticism' more evident than in his *History of English Poetry*. He is like a traveller exploring a new and delightful country, bewildered by enchanting by-ways diverging in all directions, so that however constant the pointing of his compass, his progress is delayed by innumerable excursions. Although his exploration is neither quite thorough nor quite complete, his guide book is both fascinating in itself and invaluable in pointing out the way for future travellers through the same land.

Warton was unable to begin his history at an earlier point than Pope or Gray had proposed, a fault of which he was conscious. His excuse was his ignorance of Anglo-Saxon,—of which all but a very few antiquarians of his day were also ignorant—so that even the slightest study of the subject would have almost doubled a labour that was at best little short of Herculean. To atone in some degree for the omission of the earlier periods, and to clear the way for the history proper, Warton thought it necessary to preface his first volume with two dissertations in which he considered in some detail materials which, while important for the development of his subject, would have marred the unity of his design. The second of these dissertations, *On the Introduction of Learning into England*, is crammed with valuable facts concerning the period before the history itself begins; facts which, presented as

Warton presented them, were more interesting to the antiquarian than to the man of taste, but which had at least the charm of novelty. And the author's satisfaction that the barrenness of scholastic learning yielded place to the 'beautiful extravagancies of romantic²⁰ fabling' is an interesting expression of his sound belief that imagination is a more important factor than reason in the production of great poetry.

In the first dissertation, *On the Origin of Romantic Fiction in Europe*, Warton was dealing with a subject which had always fascinated him, and to which he first gave the importance it deserved in the history of English literature. His theory of the origin of romance in Europe, however, is marred by the absurd and fanciful ethnologies advanced by the seventeenth and eighteenth century scholars upon which it was necessarily based. Without the solid foundation supplied by the recently developed sciences of comparative philology and anthropology, earlier scholars had recourse to vague theories based upon superficial resemblances that now seem unworthy of serious attention. These prevalent misconceptions Warton naturally accepted, so that much of his theory of romance is now antiquated, though, as usual, many details are singularly correct and illuminating.

Warton's manner of arriving at his theory that the material of romantic fiction was largely of ultimately oriental origin is far more questionable than the conclusion itself, and his happy discovery of at least a half-truth when reasoned certainty was—and perhaps still is—impossible, is remarkably like genius. His perfectly clear recognition of the importance of oral poetry as a source of written poetry,²¹ his happily conjectured theory of the gradual building up of long romances by the artistic combination of previously existing shorter narratives,²² his acceptance of Bretagne as an ancient centre of romantic story where Celtic influence combined with British, Scandinavian, and French,²³ and his conclusion that various as were their sources, the earliest metrical romances were written in French,²⁴ are theories which, though still in dispute, a modern scholar need not fear to avow, and even one of which he would be proud to father. They show also an ability to deal with comparative literature and an intimate knowledge of middle English literature far in advance of his age, and illustrate his positive genius for

²⁰Warton used the term *romantic* here as a derivative of romance, that kind of fictitious tale characteristic of mediæval literature. In this sense he said it was 'entirely unknown to the writers of Greece and Rome.'

²¹*Hist. Eng. Poetry*, Diss. I, pp. (1), (31-2). The pages in the dissertations are not numbered in the first editions; this numbering is, therefore, my own.

²²*Ibid.* p. (9), and vol. I, p. 38.

²³*Ibid.* Diss. I, pp. (3-9), (48).

²⁴*Ibid.* vol. I, p. 145.

pointing out ways by which subsequent scholars were to obtain valuable results.

As in his *Observations on the Faerie Queen*, Warton's study of romances involved also the social and religious life of an age which was as richly imaginative in its romantic chivalry and its deep-seated faith in the miraculous as in its literature. Not the least valuable part of the discussion of the earlier periods was the copious extracts from the old romances,—*Richard Cœur de Leon*, *Sir Guy*, *the Squire of Low Degree*, and others that had long lain neglected in dusty old manuscript collections. Unscholarly as the texts of these excerpts are, they stimulated interest in the originals and were no doubt partly responsible for the series of modernizations and editions of romances which followed.²⁵ His study of the romances and other early poetry²⁶ indicates his attempt to take into account the elusive but none the less potent influences upon English poetry even before the time of Chaucer and the generally recognized poets, and distinguishes him from an age of critics who, whatever they may have thought of the poetic genius of the first English poets, denied them their due place in the development of English poetry and entirely disregarded any influences upon them.²⁷ Warton differs from every other critic of his age in constantly regarding literature as a whole, as a continual stream of progress—with eddies and whirlpools and backwaters—but also with a steady and deep current, and with numberless tributaries.

Although Warton properly excluded dramatic poetry from his design, he was unable to resist the temptation to discuss its origin and early development, and his two long digressions²⁸ constitute the first valuable study of that subject and complete his interpretation of mediæval life. On the basis of his reading of French memoirs on the subject,²⁹ and his first hand acquaintance with the 'originals' in 'books

²⁵The early editors of romances, Ritson, Ellis, and Weber, constantly refer to Warton's *History*.

²⁶Warton has extracts from many favourite mediæval lyrics, *Alison*, *Lenten is come with love to town*, *Sumer is icumen*, etc., as well as from many such longer poems as *Hule and Nightengale*, *Manuel de Peche*, and *Land of Cokayne*.

²⁷'I cannot . . . help observing, that English literature and English poetry suffer, while so many pieces of this kind still remain concealed and forgotten in our manuscript libraries. They contain in common with the prose romances . . . amusing instances of antient customs and institutions . . . and they preserve pure and unmixed, those fables of chivalry which formed the taste and awakened the imagination of our elder English classics.' I, pp. 208-9.

²⁸*Ibid.* I, pp. 233-251; II, 366-406; III, 321-328.

²⁹Du Tilliot's *Memoirs pour servir a l'histoire de la Fete de Foux*, 1741, and Voltaire's *Essais sur les Mœurs et l'Esprit des Nations*, 1756, and others; see bibliography of sources.

and manuscripts not easily found nor often examined,³⁰ he discussed the religious, secular and scholastic beginnings of the drama in a way that was not only valuable for its originality at the time it appeared, but authoritative as late as the second quarter of the next century when Collier quoted it as the most valuable source of information on the subject.³¹

Chaucer is of course the chief figure in the first volume of the history, and it is by the adequacy and soundness of the criticism of his work that Warton's ability is best tested. Professor Lounsbury's estimate of its value is juster than his explanation of its faults. The 'work . . . is one', he says, 'which it will perhaps be always necessary to consult for its facts, its references, and its inferences; and though in many points it needs to be corrected, a long time will certainly elapse before it will be superseded. . . . But while the substantial merits of the chapters on Chaucer need not be denied, they are very far from being perfectly satisfactory.' Its defects are however due rather to Warton's inevitably imperfect knowledge of middle English and of Chaucer's sources—though his knowledge at this point was approached by none of his generation save Tyrwhitt—than, as Professor Lounsbury supposes, to his desire 'to parade his own knowledge' rather than to throw light upon his author, or to an apologetic air that gives the 'impression that he admired Chaucer greatly, and was ashamed of himself for having been caught in the act.'³² In this Professor Lounsbury seems to have fallen somewhat into the common habit of condemning eighteenth century critics *en masse* without making sufficient distinctions among them. Warton's learning is never ostentatious although he is often unwise in not making a more rigid selection of material; and he conspicuously lacks the apologetic attitude adopted by some of his contemporaries. Nothing is more certain than that he had more than the eighteenth century antiquary's boundless curiosity—although he had that too; he was animated by genuine love of learning and real interest in making accessible to others the dark places in literary and social history, and, since he would entirely fail of his purpose if he antagonized his public, he used every means to arouse in them the same enthusiasm that he himself

³⁰*Hist. Eng. Poetry*. I, p. 250.

³¹Collier's *History of English Dramatic Poetry to the time of Shakespeare*, 1831. Preface. Malone's essay, an *Historical Account of the . . . English Stage*, prefixed to his edition of Shakespeare in 1790 quotes Warton's history freely and was probably further indebted to Warton's later private study. See Warton's letters to Malone, printed in full with notes, in *The Journal of English and German Philology*, vol. XIV, no. I, pp. 107-118.

³²*Studies in Chaucer*, 3 vols. 1892. III, pp. 246-7.

felt for those splendid periods of English poetry before their own elegant and polished age.

The historical method which had been Warton's great contribution to criticism in his *Observations on the Faerie Queen* he applied more extensively in the *History of Poetry*. The first step in the study of Chaucer was an attempt to represent his social and literary environment and antecedents in order that he might be rightly understood. The eighteenth century gentleman of taste despised Chaucer because, by an anachronism that passed over four centuries of literary activity and progress as if they were nothing, they insisted upon judging him by the same standards which they applied to Pope and Waller. Warton, first realizing the fallacy of this method, studied the wide diversity in manners, customs, and literary ideals of the two periods and made the necessary allowance for the difference. It seemed to him worth while to consider Chaucer as the brilliant student, the popular and favoured courtier and diplomat, the extensive traveller, and the polished man of the world as well as the 'first English versifier who wrote poetically,'³³ since his familiarity with splendid processions and gallant carousals, with the practices and diversions of polite life, his connections with the great at home and his personal acquaintance with the vernacular poetry of foreign countries, helped to mould his poetry quite as much as his knowledge of the classical writers, and enabled him to give in the *Canterbury Tales* 'such an accurate picture of antient manners, as no cotemporary has transmitted to posterity.'³⁴

Warton's study of Chaucer's literary antecedents shows a more thorough knowledge of the comparative field of literature during the Middle Ages than he is sometimes credited with.³⁵ His discussion of Provençal literature, based largely upon the study of the French and Italian antiquaries and historians,³⁶ and of its influence upon English poetry, especially upon Chaucer, is much abler and fuller than any previous discussions of the subject³⁷ and may still be read with profit. He treats briefly but suggestively such important points for the study of Chaucer as the moral and allegorical tendency of Provençal poetry, its relation to classical poetry on the side of allegory,³⁸ its mystical and conventional conception of love, and the nice distinction between the metaphysical delicacy of the Provençal ideal of love represented in

³³Johnson: *Dictionary*, Pref. p. 1., and *Hist. Eng. Poetry*, I, p. 341 ff.

³⁴*Hist. Eng. Poetry*, I, p. 435.

³⁵e.g. Saintsbury: *The Flourishing of Romance*, New York, 1907. p. 139.

³⁶See bibliography of sources.

³⁷Rymer: *A Short View of Tragedy*, 1693, pp. 67-83. Pope and Gray, plans for a history of poetry.

³⁸*Hist. Eng. Poetry*, I, p. 457.

Guillaume de Lorris and the conventional formality of the later method of reducing the passion of love to a system, based upon Ovid's *Art of Love*.³⁹

Warton also made a detailed study of Chaucer's relations to his sources that anticipated modern investigation of the subject. His discovery of *Le Teseide* as the source of the *Knight's Tale* was an important contribution that probably owed nothing to Thynne's similar assertion.⁴⁰ Both Dryden and Urry had recognized Chaucer's general indebtedness to Boccaccio on his own statements, but the nature and extent of the indebtedness had not been discussed before.⁴¹ In his study of Chaucer's sources Warton was, however, even more concerned to show his originality than his mere borrowings, his heightenings of the original fictions, the additions and contractions which help to make his poems 'strike us with an air of originality,'⁴² a charm further increased by his 'considerable talents for the artificial construction of a story'⁴³ and his 'nervous' and 'flowing numbers'. His enthusiasm was keenest for his most original work, the *Canterbury Tales*, 'specimens of Chaucer's narrative genius, unassisted and unalloyed,' in which 'the figures are all British, and bear no suspicious signatures of classical, Italian, or French imitation.'⁴⁴ And he justified his method by showing that this great

³⁹*Ibid.* I, p. 383.

⁴⁰Francis Thynne's *Animadversions*, etc., 1598 (Chaucer Society, 1876, p. 43). Warton would certainly have referred to this had he known of it. A note to Tyrwhitt's *Essay on the Language and Versification of Chaucer*, 'It is so little a while since the world has been informed that the *Palamon and Arcite* of Chaucer was taken from the *Theseida* of Boccace,' seems to point to Warton as the author of the discovery.

Joseph Warton, in his *Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope* expressed surprise that Chaucer's borrowing from Boccaccio should have been so long unobserved, since Nicéron, in his *Memoirs*, published in 1736—a book which he says was well-known, had given an abstract of the story of *Palamon and Arcite*. He added, '*G. Chaucer, l'Homere de son pays, a mis l'ouvrage de Boccace en vers Anglois.*' (I, p. 335, ed. 1806.) Neither Thomas Warton nor Tyrwhitt mentions this work however. This passage in J. Warton's essay was first inserted in an appendix to the third edition (1772-1782) and in the body of the fourth edition in 1782. The recent discovery of the source of *Palamon and Arcite* to which he refers was therefore certainly his brother's. (Mr. David H. Bishop, of Columbia University, has looked up this passage for me in the various editions of J. Warton's essay.)

⁴¹The authority and adequacy of Warton's discussion are shown by the fact that Skeat refers his readers to this section of Warton's history 'for further remarks on this Tale.' Ed. *Chaucer*, 1894, III, 394.

⁴²*Ibid.* I, p. 357.

⁴³*Hist. Eng. Poetry*, III, p. 367.

⁴⁴*Ibid.* I, p. 435.

achievement was the result of Chaucer's 'knowledge of the world' and 'observation on life' combined with his literary artistry and his genius.

Although Warton set out to be the historian rather than the critic of English poetry, his history is shot through with flashes of his enthusiasm for natural and imaginative rather than conventional and reasoned beauties. He admired the *Knight's Tale* not for those partial conformities to the rules for epic poetry that commended it to Dryden and Urry, but in spite of its violation of the rules and because of its direct appeal to the imagination and feelings. 'It abounds', he says, 'in those incidents which are calculated to strike the fancy by opening resources to sublime description, or interest the heart by pathetic situations. On this account, even without considering the poetical and exterior ornaments of the piece, we are hardly disgusted with the mixture of manners, the confusion of times, and the like violations of propriety, which this poem, in common with all others of its age, presents in almost every page.'⁴⁵ His study of the *House of Fame* shows a similar appreciation of the essential beauties of romantic poetry: he praised it for its 'great strokes of Gothic imagination, yet bordering often on the most ideal and capricious extravagance,'⁴⁶ and condemned Pope's mistaken attempt to 'correct its extravagancies, by new refinements and additions of another cast,' in the famous comparison: 'An attempt to unite order and exactness of imagery with a subject formed on principles so professedly romantic and anomalous, is like giving Corinthian pillars to a Gothic palace. When I read Pope's elegant imitation of this piece, I think I am walking among the modern monuments unsuitably placed in Westminster Abbey.'⁴⁷

Warton's real taste for imaginative poetry as represented in the romances and Chaucer's poetry, made him dwell lovingly and long on that period, on Chaucer as at once the flower of romance and the renaissance and as an independent and original genius superior to his age, and lament the inevitability of the decay of imaginative poetry after his death. Although he had intended to complete the history of seven centuries of English poetry in two volumes, he devoted, perhaps not altogether unwisely, the whole first volume to the least known and least prolific period and turned with reluctance from that period to one in which the decay of romance was followed by a revival of learning. He recognized that the new age would have its compensations: 'As knowledge and learning encrease, poetry begins to deal less in imagination:

⁴⁵*Ibid.* I, p. 367.

⁴⁶*Ibid.* I, p. 389.

⁴⁷*Ibid.* I, p. 396.

and these fantastic beings give way to real manners and living characters; yet he knew too that a revival of imagination must precede another great poetic age.

CHAPTER VI

THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH POETRY. VOLUME II, 1778

THE REVIVAL OF LEARNING

At the time the first volume of the *History of Poetry* was published, Warton had in hand much of the material for the second, and expected it to follow very soon. In September following the appearance of the first volume he wrote to his friend Price, 'I have the pleasure to tell you that great part of the second volume of my *History* is ready for press'.¹ The work, however, did not go on so well as was expected, and the second volume was delayed for four years. It was just at this time that Lord North, who had been a contemporary of Warton at Trinity, sent his son up to Oxford to be under Warton's special charge from 1774 to 1777, during which time he relinquished his other pupils.² The preparation of a collected edition of his poems, which appeared in 1777, must also have hindered the history somewhat.

Probably the principal reason for the delay of the second volume however was the necessity the author felt of including in it a discussion of the Rowley-Chatterton poems which were then almost universally believed to be genuine fifteenth century poems. Warton had called them spurious when they were submitted to him by the Chancellor of Oxford, the Earl of Lichfield, in 1772, but they were so generally accepted as genuine, even by Tyrwhitt, who later helped to expose the forgery, that he reluctantly admitted them to a place in his history, at the same time denying their authenticity. Warton's first step in this matter had been to send to William Barrett, the Bristol antiquary-surgeon, for conclusive evidence. Although Barrett furnished him with plenty of information,³ he was a complete victim of Chatterton's hoax, and Warton was naturally dissatisfied with his verdict. He then appealed to Percy for a less biased opinion, in the following letter:—

Dear Sir

I should esteem it a particular favour if you could conveniently communicate to me what you know about Rowley's poems at Bristol. I have a correspondence with

¹Winton. Sept. 30, 1774. Mant, Op. cit. p. lxxiv.

²*Ibid.*, pp. lxxiv-lxxv.

³*Hist. Eng. Poetry*. II, p. 142, note. References to the second and third volumes are to the first edition.

Mr. Barret of that place, but he rather embarrasses than clears the subject. He has sent me a fragment of Parchment; on it a piece of a poem on a Mayor's feast, the ink & the Parchment seemingly antient. It is necessary that I should consider him whether spurious or not, as there has been so much noise about the Discovery, & as so many are convinced of the poems being genuine. If possible, I request the favour of your answer immediately; & am, Dear Sir,

Your very affectionate
friend & servt
T. Warton.

Jul. 29, 1774
Winchester

P. S. Please to direct at Winton.⁴

Percy's reply is not to be found, but cannot have been convincing, for a year and a half later Warton was still trying vainly to bring himself to the popular opinion, and hurried by the demands of his printer.

Dear Sir

I have received the favour of yours, which is quite satisfactory.

As to Chatterton, I have considered that subject pro and con, not professing to enter *minutely* into the controversy, but just as much as the general nature of my work properly required. I own I lean to the side of the forgery: but if you could send me *only one capital* argument in favor of the genuineness of Rowley's poems, I should accept it most thankfully. I would willingly come to town on purpose, but it is impossible: and at the same time I am ashamed to interrupt your Engagements. The Press is drawing near to this period. I will send you speedily the Extract you mention from the Selden Manuscript: and am, Dear Sir, your most affectionate

humble servt.
T. Warton

Trin. Coll.—
Jan 25 1776

To
Reverend Dr. Percy
at Northumberland-house
London⁵

Another letter to Percy written a month later shows the volume going on through the press and Warton busy with the rest of the volume.

Dear Sir

Since I wrote last, the sheet in which is a Note⁶ about James the first, is gone to Press. I send a proof of the Note, which perhaps will give you as much Information as you want on the Subject. Otherwise, I will make a further search, & gett the poem transcribed if necessary. I throw in, *Currente Prælo*, the notice

⁴Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 32329 f. 76.

⁵Same, f. 83.

⁶*Hist. Eng. Poetry*, II, 125-6.

at the end about a *song* being in your possession. My work, (I mean the Second Volume,) which is much indebted to you, goes on very briskly.

I am, Dear Sir,

Your most affectionate
humble servant

T. Warton.

Trin Coll. Oxon.

Feb. 22, 1776.⁷

The progress of the second volume though steady was slow. In November, 1776, Warton was hopeful that it would soon appear,⁸ but he spent the following summer at Winchester hard at work upon it, and in September wrote to Price, 'My second volume goes on swimmingly. I have already written almost the whole; but I intend a third volume, of which more when we meet.'⁹ The next year the second volume was published.

Warton had closed his first volume with a note of regret that the flowering of romance was inevitably followed by a period of greater learning but of poetic decadence; the second volume was taken up with the struggle between learning and imagination which was to result in their fusion in the great poetic age. For this period Warton had less genuine enthusiasm and interest than for the more imaginative and productive periods, and this volume is therefore less satisfactory; it is a more miscellaneous mass of minute discussions of details and of general views of important large subjects into which at times flash the genius and enthusiasm of the critic. In his first volume he had shown how Chaucer was influenced by his age; in the second he showed how certain of the influences upon him becoming dominant had suppressed poetry, how Chaucer's genius could combine romance and learning while his contemporaries with less genius and more ambition to be thought scholars¹⁰ sacrificed romance to learning, imagination to reason and were the worse poets. 'On this account,' he said, 'the minstrels of these times, who were totally uneducated, and poured forth spontaneous rhymes in obedience to the workings of nature, often exhibit more genuine strokes of passion and imagination, than the professed poets.'¹⁰ Warton's revolt against the classical age is nowhere more apparent than in the stand he took for imagination and spontaneity as the essential qualities of poetry, and against reason and artificiality as its corrupters. In his discussion of the poetic decadence of the fifteenth century he

⁷Same, f. 85.

⁸Letter to Gough, Nov. 11, 1776. *Lit. Anec.* VI, p. 178.

⁹Mant, *Op. cit.* lxxv.

¹⁰*Hist. Eng. Poetry*, II, p. 31.

was, of course, crying out against the over-emphasis of reason in his own age, and looking forward to a similar revival of imagination and poetry.

Warton's high valuation of imagination and originality did not, however, blind him to lesser merits. It is a credit to his historical sense that with only a general survey of the political, social, and literary conditions of the period and with no accurate knowledge of philology,¹¹ he was able to recognize the importance of the transition period for the development and enrichment of the language, and to point out that Chaucer, Gower, and Occleve had not, as was generally thought,¹² 'corrupted the purity of the English language, by affecting to introduce so many foreign words and phrases,'¹³ but that they had used the language of their age, a language that was then undergoing important changes particularly under French influence, and that was gaining in 'copiousness, elegance, and harmony' by these innovations.¹⁴

His appreciation of Chaucer's contemporaries too was remarkably just; in discussing them he fell neither into the error of absurdly exaggerating their merits, nor, by too close comparison with Chaucer, of equally absurdly underrating their importance. He found in Gower an almost perfect example of a poet whose erudition overtopped his invention, who was 'serious and didactic on all occasions' and possessed 'the tone of the scholar and the moralist on the most lively topics;'¹⁵ who 'supplied from his common-place book' what he 'wanted in invention.'¹⁶ Yet he realized that Gower was not only important for the historical study of the progress of English poetry during the fifteenth century but of such intrinsic value that 'if Chaucer had not existed,' his poetry 'would alone have been sufficient to rescue the reigns of Edward the third and Richard the second from the imputation of barbarism.'¹⁷ Warton's analysis of the influence of the mediæval story-books, those 'commodious abridgements' of all sacred and profane stories in which both classical and mediæval stories were adapted to the taste of the times, upon which Gower's *Confessio Amantis* was modelled, and from which it drew quite as much as from Jean de Meun's part of the

¹¹Even such as Tyrwhitt possessed. Ed. Chaucer, *Essay on the Language and Versification of Chaucer*.

¹²Both Dr. Johnson and Tyrwhitt likewise remonstrated against this belief . . . *The History of the English Language*, prefaced to Johnson's *Dictionary*, 1755, and Tyrwhitt's *Essay*.

¹³*Hist. Eng. Poetry*. II, p. 50.

¹⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁵*Ibid.* II, p. 2.

¹⁶*Ibid.* II, p. 4.

¹⁷*Ibid.* II, p. 1.

Roman de la Rose, shows an extensive knowledge of the literary traditions of the period and of their development in the next age into an eager interest in the original authors from which the compilations had been made.¹⁸ In addition to this just criticism, he made an original contribution to the study of Gower by the discovery of the *Cinquantes Balades* and the publication of four of them with appropriate recognition of their merit and discussion of their relation to French and English love poems.¹⁹

Lydgate's treatment of romantic material concerned the historian quite as much as the versatility and ease of versification which he was inclined to think placed him next to Chaucer in those respects at least. He did not, however, neglect his poetry, though he did not attempt, as Ritson did, to enumerate the long list of poems attributed to him.²⁰ He evidently desired to do justice to him as a poet who 'moved with equal ease in every mode of composition,' who was clear and fluent in phrase but often 'tedious and languid.'²¹ With true poetic taste he managed to cull from the *Lyfe of our Lady* a number of the best lines, which probably improved the poet's reputation.²²

It has been said that Warton considered it necessary to discuss the Rowley poems in that period of the history to which their pretended author belonged. While we cannot altogether approve his judgment in so doing, his defense, that, since they were generally accredited,²³ though

¹⁸*Ibid.* II, II, ff.

¹⁹Emendations to volume II. Warton found these French poems in a manuscript lent him by Lord Trentham.

²⁰Warton was well aware of their great number; 'To enumerate Lydgate's pieces, would be to write the catalogue of a little library.' He realized that to catalogue them was then less worth while than to present a just estimate of the poet and his best work. Ritson's list, in his *Bibliographia Poetica*, was a valuable achievement for its time. Ed. 1802, pp. 66-87.

²¹*Hist. Eng. Poetry*, II, pp. 52, 58.

²²Gray's praise of Lydgate was somewhat extravagant; he quoted some lines which he declared entitled him to a place among the greatest poets, but mentioned the *Life of our Lady* only in a note, making no quotation from it. His *Remarks on the Poems of Lydgate* are among the few manuscript notes which he had made for his history of poetry, published from his commonplace book in 1814 by T. J. Mathias. *Works* II, pp. 55-80.

²³There was some disagreement among scholars as to their authenticity. Warton had been sceptical when he first saw them in 1772, and Johnson had satisfied himself of the imposture in 1776. Walpole seems to have considered them genuine until Mason and Gray, to whom he sent the manuscripts sent him by Chatterton,

not generally accessible,²⁴ it was his duty to give them a place if only that a more just estimate of their authenticity might be formed,²⁵ has some weight, and he was the first to attempt an adequate discussion of the question.

Warton's impartial presentation of the question affords an illustration of his openmindedness that is the more interesting and creditable to him because the conclusion at which he had arrived seems to have been unwelcome. Apparently he would have been glad to find that these remarkable poems were really the work of a monk of the fifteenth century. 'It is with regret that I find myself obliged to pronounce Rowlie's poems to be spurious. Antient remains of English poetry, unexpectedly discovered, and fortunately rescued from a long oblivion, are contemplated with a degree of fond enthusiasm: exclusive of any real or intrinsic excellence, they afford those pleasures, arising from the idea of antiquity, which deeply interest the imagination. With these pleasures we are unwilling to part. But there is a more solid satisfaction, resulting from the detection of artifice and imposture.'²⁶ His romantic imagination was kindled at the thought of poems hidden away for three hundred years in Cannynge's chest in Radcliffe Church, and accidentally discovered and rescued from wanton sacrifice to the utilitarian end of making writing-book covers. His love of antiquarian treasures was outraged at the thought of what might have been in this way lost to literary and social history. He rejoiced that the schoolmaster of Bristol

declared them forgeries. Warton: *Enquiry into the Authenticity of the Poems attributed to Thomas Rowley*, London, 1782, p. 1. Boswell's *Life*, Hill Ed. III, p. 50, and *Letters*, I, pp. 398 and 404. Walpole: *Letters*, Toynbee Ed. X, p. 246. Cf. also *Dic. Nat. Biog.* art. *Chatterton*. Goldsmith believed firmly in them. Walpole: *Works*, ed. 1798, IV, p. 224. Tyrwhitt had not given up the authenticity of the poems at the time Warton's discussion was written. *Emendations to the Hist. Eng. Poetry*, vol. II, p. 164. His appendix to prove that they were written wholly by Chatterton was added to the third edition of the poems which appeared simultaneously with Warton's second volume, 1778.

²⁴Only two of the poems were printed before Tyrwhitt's anonymous edition of *Poems supposed to have been written at Bristol, by Thomas Rowley and others, in the Fifteenth Century*, . . . 1777, by which time this part of Warton's history was written. *Emendations*, II, 164. Letters to Percy, *supra*. The unknown author of *An Examination of the poems attributed to Thomas Rowley, and William Cannynge. With a defense of the opinion of Mr. Warton*, (?1782), said, 'at the time Mr. Warton published his history, these Poems were not published; only few were in possession of copies of them; the world at large was totally ignorant of their contents. . . . Even the industry of Mr. Warton could procure but few specimens of them when in manuscript.' p. 7.

²⁵*Hist. Eng. Poetry*, II, p. 139.

²⁶*Hist. Eng. Poetry*, II, p. 164.

was not without a taste for poetry and that his extraordinarily gifted son recognized the merits of the poems and offered them to the world. The possibilities of this promising situation almost carried Warton to a belief in the story,—but when he turned to the poems themselves, the illusion vanished. Rowley might have been a scholar, an historian, an antiquary, a poet, but he could hardly have been the author of the poems ascribed to him.²⁷

Although as a scholar Warton condemned the poems as forgeries, as a poet he could not but be struck by their poetic excellence,—no less remarkable as the work of a boy of sixteen than as that of a monk of the fifteenth century. With an extravagant enthusiasm, more like that of the later 'romantic' admirers of Chatterton than his own usual moderation, he exclaimed, 'This youth, who died at eighteen, was a prodigy of genius: and would have proved the first of English poets, had he reached a maturer age.'²⁸

Warton's discussion of the Chatterton forgeries, although the first,²⁹ was by no means the last; the controversy was kept up with a stubbornness that was made possible only by the ignorance and gullibility of the Rowley supporters.³⁰ And it may be quite as well to anticipate somewhat and finish here the discussion of Warton's connection with it. While the question of authenticity was virtually settled from the start by every scholar of any competence,—Gray, Malone, Johnson, Warton, Tyrwhitt,—there were a number of scholarly clergymen so tenacious of a belief very scantily based upon external evidence only, that it became necessary for final and decisive proof to be furnished by some competent authority. Two of the most learned men of the age, Warton and Tyrwhitt, offered to say this last word in 1782;³¹ and the efforts of both were of nearly equal effect at the time of their publication; they convinced all who were open to conviction.

The merit of Warton's conclusion in the Chatterton controversy can be

²⁷*Ibid.*, p. 156.

²⁸*Hist. Eng. Poetry*, II, p. 157. Chas. Kent, in the *Dict. Nat. Biog.* erroneously ascribed this remark to Joseph Warton.

²⁹Walpole's *Letter to the Editor of the Miscellanies of Chatterton*, Strawberry-Hill; 1779, is rather a discussion of Walpole's relations with Chatterton than of the forgeries themselves. Walpole's *Works*, IV, p. 207 ff.

³⁰For bibliography of the Chatterton controversy, see *Chattertoniana*, by F. A. Hyett and W. Bazeley. Gloucester, 1914.

³¹Warton: *An Enquiry into the Authenticity of the Poems attributed to Thomas Rowley. In which the arguments of the Dean of Exeter, and Mr. Bryant are examined.* London, 1782. Two editions in the same year.

Tyrwhitt: *A Vindication of the Appendix to the Poems, called Rowley's, in reply to the Answers of the Dean of Exeter, etc.*, London, 1782.

adequately appreciated only by a recognition of the fact that he reached it not only in opposition to his inclination, but without the help of any thorough knowledge of the language of the fifteenth century such as Tyrwhitt possessed, and its importance only by the fact just mentioned that it contributed quite as much to settle the controversy in the eighteenth century as even Tyrwhitt's more scholarly essay. It is a striking fact that although Warton's criticism of Chatterton's affected obsolete words could be based only upon superficial observation, he not only objected to their genuineness on this ground, but was able to cite some of the very books from which the young poet must actually have derived his remarkable vocabulary.³²

Moreover, the conclusiveness of a purely scholarly argument based entirely upon accurate knowledge of the philological side of the problem was not so promptly recognized in an age of general ignorance of philology as it would be today. A proof that would convince the dilettante supporters of Rowley must be based upon the more obvious qualities of the poems which they could recognize. This was the sort of argument that Warton's pamphlet furnished. Therefore whatever superiority Tyrwhitt showed as a philologist was equalled by Warton's superiority as a critic and student of literature,—a fact that has not always received due credit. He was able to compare the literary traditions and conditions of the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries and decide even without reference to specific language tests, to which period a group of poems belonged. By this method he easily demonstrated that the affiliations of the Rowley poems were altogether with the eighteenth century. He concluded the discussion thus, 'Upon the whole, . . . if there are such things as principles of analogy, if the rules which criticism has established for judging of the age of a poem, are beyond the caprice of conjecture, then are the *TRAGEDY OF ELLA* and the *BATTLE OF HASTINGS*, modern compositions: if they are antient, then are the elegancies of Gibbon's style coeval with the deplorable prose of Caxton.'³³

Returning to the proper subjects of the history of poetry in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Chaucerian imitators, Warton found less interesting material than the Chatterton forgeries; imagination was more and more oppressed by conscious effort. Yet he creditably performed the duty of an historian, considering carefully the relations between Hawes³⁴ and Lydgate, between Barclay's *Ship of Fools* and

³²*Hist. Eng. Poetry*, II, p. 157. See also Skeat's ed. *Chatterton*, London, 1901, 2 vols. II, pp. xxv-xxvii, and xli.

³³*Enquiry*, p. 90.

³⁴Warton was cited as an authority on Hawes by Thomas Wright in the only modern edition of the *Pastime of Pleasure*, for the Percy Society, vol. 18, 1845.

Brandt's *Narrenschiffe* through Latin and French translations, and the growing modernity of the language of these poets. He accompanied the whole with numerous quotations from these then almost inaccessible fifteenth century poems³⁵ of almost unknown poets. He also found it necessary, as has every other historian of English poetry, to give an account of the Scottish poets³⁶ who preserved the traditions of Chaucer as none of his English successors was able to preserve it, and who 'adorned the . . . period, with a degree of sentiment and spirit, a command of phraseology, and a fertility of imagination, not to be found in any English poet since Chaucer and Lydgate.'³⁷

Two significant points stand out in the discussion of the poems of Dunbar, Douglas and Lindsay:³⁸ the theory of poetic diction implied in the experiment of turning Douglas's *Prologue to May*³⁹ into prose to show that its high poetic quality did not depend altogether upon the form, and the recognition of the influence of racial characteristics in national poetry. Warton's experiment of placing a prose paraphrase in juxtaposition with the poem to show the originality of the poet's genius and the beauty of its poetical matter independent of its form—a test to which it would have been dangerous to subject much of Queen Anne poetry—was a great stride in the direction of the new romantic conception of poetry; it suggests Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction without its absurdities. For although Warton intended a deliberate revolt against the too prevalent tendency to regard poetry as largely a more or less skillful combination of poetic diction and metrical composition, he did not go to the opposite extreme of regarding these things as non-essentials, of considering the prose form as quite as poetical as the verse form. Of the characteristic beauties of Douglas's poem he

³⁵Warton's quotations from Barclay's eclogues were particularly valuable, for those poems were reprinted from the exceedingly rare black letter folio of 1570, from which he quoted them only in 1885, for the Spenser Society, vol. 39. See also T. H. Jamieson's edition of the *Ship of Fools*, 2 vols. 1874. Prefatory note.

³⁶Warton's not very valuable sources, besides the universal histories, were the collection of biographies amassed by the over-patriotic Dempster, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Scotorum*, Bologna, 1627, and MacKenzie's 'shapeless mass of inert matter,' *The Lives and Characters of the Most Eminent Writers of the Scotch Nation*. 1708-22.

³⁷*Hist. Eng. Poetry*, II, p. 257.

³⁸Warton had mentioned James I's *King's Complaint*, as he called it, in his second volume (note p. 125) where the poem was first mentioned and quoted from.

³⁹The poem was not unknown. Two English versions had appeared in 1752, one in the *Scot's Magazine*, by Jerome Stone, the other by Francis Fawkes. The latter was also included in *Original Poems and Translations*, 1761. Fawkes's translation was reprinted for the Aungerville Society, 1884-6, vol. III.

said, 'Divested of poetic numbers and expression, they still retain their poetry; and . . . appear like Ulysses, still a king and conqueror, although disguised like a peasant.'⁴⁰ This experiment is part of Warton's general revolt, both in poetry and in criticism, against the artificial poetry written by the Augustan poets and upheld by the Augustan critics,⁴¹ and his attempt to re-establish a higher kind of poetry which combines poetic substance and poetic form in an inseparable whole.

It was the prominence of satire in the Scotch allegorical poetry, especially the satire of church abuses, that led Warton to remark the influence upon Scotch literature of the characteristic Scotch temper, a kind of remark more common in the next century than in his own. The modernity of Warton's attitude becomes more apparent when one compares it with Dr. Johnson's contempt for the Scotch temper which he never attempted to understand. Warton however pointed out that in the peculiarly philosophical or rationalistic temper of the Scotch, a disposition almost without imagination and responsive not to an imaginative and sensuous appeal but to reason alone, was to be found the explanation of the ready adoption in Scotland of the severe reformed religion and of the greater violence and abundance of satirical attacks upon the Roman Catholic faith.⁴²

The originality of Skelton, as it seemed not to have its source in more lively imagination, did not atone, in the mind of the historian, for the deliberate roughness of his verse, and his satirical power, reinforced though it was with humour and the gift of personification, he did not think adequate to excuse his coarseness. Warton had much of the eighteenth century insistence upon sound moral standards in criticism. As an historian of the progress of literature, he did not fail to consider in his discussion of Skelton the importance of his moralities in the history of the drama; in this connection is the mention of the moral interlude of *Nigramansir*,⁴³ since lost.

⁴⁰*Hist. Eng. Poetry*, II, p. 289.

⁴¹See Johnson's *Life of Dryden*, *Works*, ed. cit. III, p. 439. Even Gray recognized a well-established poetic diction. See letter to West, *Works*, Ed. Gosse, 1884, II, p. 108.

⁴²*Hist. Eng. Poetry*, II, p. 321.

⁴³There has been no record of *Nigramansir* since Warton saw it in the library of William Collins, at Chichester, not long before the latter's death in 1759. When the valuable collection that he had made for his intended *History of the Restoration of Learning under Leo the Tenth* was dispersed, this unique volume seems to have wholly disappeared. *Hist. Eng. Poetry*, II, p. 361. But there is not, I think, any just reason for doubting Warton's honesty in this matter on this account. The perfectly simple and straightforward account of the book which he gives, exactly of a piece with many others that are unquestionable, is, *per se*, more probable than

To repeat what cannot perhaps be overemphasized, the great theme of Warton's first volume was the rise and influence of mediæval romances upon English poetry; the corresponding subject of the second volume was the revival of learning and its counter influence. His attitude toward the renaissance combines genuine appreciation of classical literature, of the 'faultless models of Greece and Rome,' and of the immense gain in depth and breadth they brought to English learning, with enthusiasm for the marvelous and delightful creations of the dark ages whose disappearance he regarded with regret. But much as he realized the poetical value of mediæval life, its variety and richness, the very savagery and irregularity of the incidents and adventures of chivalry, he regarded the revival of learning as a necessary corrective of its faults, as a 'mighty deliverance after many imperfect and interrupted efforts in which the mouldering Gothic fabrics of false religion and false philosophy fell together;' and he pointed out that it was eventually followed by a period of high attainment, that 'soon after the reign of Elizabeth, men attained that state of general improvement, and those situations with respect to literature and life, in which they have ever since persevered.'⁴⁴

The historian's careful balance of these two important elements in the early renaissance, the waning influence of mediæval poetry and the growing power of classical learning, has an added significance since their heirs—the decadent classicism of the Augustan age and that fresh infusion of imagination from a variety of sources which is commonly called the romantic revival—were disputing the supremacy of poetry in his own day, and he had a remarkably clear perception of the growing change

Ritson's ill-natured accusation that he invented the whole account. Ritson: *Bibliographia Poetica*, p. 106. Absence of motive for the deceit, Warton's general honesty, his effort to secure accuracy of detail, and the certainty that many volumes must have disappeared, incline us to accept Warton's statement for the existence in 1759 of the morality he described. Bliss defended Warton with the statement that he had 'so frequently seen and handled volumes mentioned by Warton and denied to exist by Ritson,' that he had no doubt of the authenticity of the account. *Athen. Oxon.* ed. 1813-20, I, p. 53.

The incompatibility of the accounts of the date, size, and printers of the *Magnificence* text scarcely affects this matter. While such confusion is certainly reprehensible, it is not a question of honesty but of care. It is very easy to see how such mistakes could have been made. Probably the last reference was the only one made from Warton's own observation; the others may have been made from memory, or from an inaccurate communication. *Emendations* to II, 363. See also the edition of *Magnificence* for the *Early Eng. Text Soc.*, vol. 36-38, by R. L. Ramsay, *Introd.* pp. xviii-xix and note 2.

⁴⁴*Hist. Eng. Poetry*, II, p. 462.

and of its significance. He looked back to this earlier period both as one of important progress and as the source of the sterile classical imitation prevalent in his time, and he hailed with enthusiasm the revival of imagination as a sign of a new birth in poetry.

Therefore in an age which perpetuated more of the defects than the virtues of the revival of classical learning in England, Warton was disposed to emphasize the charms of the more imaginative past, showing in this respect a close sympathy with some of the more extreme 'romanticists'. With Rousseau,⁴⁵ who however lacked Warton's steadying sense of the danger attending upon unrestrained indulgence in the pleasures of imagination, he hailed 'ignorance and superstition, so opposite to the real interests of human society, (as) the parents of imagination.'⁴⁶ With Heine⁴⁷ he perceived the romantic quality of the mediæval religion and the tremendous stimulus given to literature by the picturesque and poetical appendages of the Catholic worship, which 'disposed the mind to a state of deception;' whose 'visions, miracles, and legends, propagated a general propensity to the Marvellous, and strengthened the belief of spectres, demons, witches, and incantations.'⁴⁸

Without really underestimating the immense gain in 'good sense, good taste, and good criticism' which had followed the revival of learning, he lamented the loss to pure poetry that had been consequent upon it, and he closed his second volume somewhat as he had closed the first, with regret for the vanished beauties of the middle ages: 'We have parted with extravagancies that are above propriety, with incredibilities that are more acceptable than truth, and with fictions that are more valuable than reality.'⁴⁹

⁴⁵*Discours sur les Sciences et les Arts*, 1750.

⁴⁶*Hist. Eng. Poetry*, II, p. 462.

⁴⁷*Die Romantische Schule*, 1833.

⁴⁸*Hist. Eng. Poetry*, II, p. 462.

⁴⁹*Ibid.* II, 463.

CHAPTER VII

THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH POETRY. VOLUME III, 1781

THE DAWN OF THE GREAT POETIC AGE

The third volume of the history followed the second after an interval of three years; it was published in 1781; probably, considering the author's inevitable hindrances, as soon as it could be prepared for the printer. Again the historian permitted himself an even more detailed treatment of his material, so that the third volume only introduced the Elizabethan age and a fourth had to be promised to complete the work. As Warton drew nearer to that great poetic age, he became more and more keenly aware of its relation to the two great influences he had been tracing through his earlier volumes, mediæval poetry and the revival of learning. He had shown how well adapted to poetry were the unrestrained imaginings of the mediæval romances and how the commencement of the revival of learning had blighted this first poetical blossoming; he was now to show that this blight was but temporary, or rather, that the conjunction of learning and romance was really a period of fertilization, of which the English renaissance was the fruit. The English renaissance was not however so simple a matter as this, and Warton did not fail to see its complexity. His discussion of this important, but then little understood, movement shows a conception of its remoter causes, its larger outlines, and its minute details that is remarkably accurate and was more illuminating than can now well be imagined, for the period was then one of the most neglected; even its greatest poets were only beginning to come into their own, and the minor ones were all but wholly unknown. It shows also the knowledge of other literatures, the ability to use the comparative method, that has been often mentioned as one of the author's chief claims to originality and permanent value as a critic and historian.

Warton at once connected the revival of classical learning and the renewed interest in Italian literature as factors in the English renaissance, yet he recognized the characteristic influence of each. Since he had discussed the revival of learning in the second volume, he began the third with the study of the influence of Italian literature in England. This influence he did not regard as wholly new, since he had previously recognized Chaucer's pupilage to Italian masters. The imitation of Petrarch by the English sonneteers was, of course, the first

Italian influence to be considered. But closely as Warton connected the influence of Italian literature in England with the revival of learning, his familiarity with mediæval literature showed him that this outburst of sonneteering had roots there also; that while 'intercourse with Italy . . . gave a new turn to our vernacular poetry',¹ the popularity of the new models was partly due to the fact that their English advocates, notably Surrey,² were educated in a court where ideas of chivalry still prevailed, and were inspired by as romantic passions as were the mediæval heroes of romance. The story of Surrey's life loses none of its romantic charm in Warton's telling and serves to introduce and partly to explain Surrey's difference from Wyatt,—his greater spontaneity, simplicity and naturalness.

Warton did not, of course, attempt the impossible task of trying to separate wholly the indirect influence of the revival of the classics which the study of Italian literature introduced into England, from the direct influence of the classics themselves, especially when both were combined in the work of one poet. In the case of Surrey he was able to make a slight distinction and to ascribe his translation of the *Aeneid* to classical influence as definitely as he did the sonnets to Italian. His insistence upon the at least equal importance of the *Aeneid* was particularly valuable at a time when that poem had been almost entirely overlooked.³ The importance of the translation he based upon the two-fold contribution of the classical renaissance to English poetry. As 'the first composition in blank verse, extant in the English language,' he hailed it as 'a noble attempt to break the bondage of rhyme'⁴—the result of a similar revolt in Italy under the influence of the study and imitation of the classics—and to improve the English versification by the introduction of new models and 'new elegancies of composition.' As a vernacular version of a classical poem he assigned it to the inundation of classical translations that had been steadily enriching the stock of poetical material and acting as a stimulus to creative poetry, that had been making 'the divinities and heroes of pagan antiquity' so familiar that they not only 'decorated every composition' but were

¹*Hist. Eng. Poetry*, III, p. 1.

²*Ibid.* p. 27. Perhaps because Tottel gave Surrey greater prominence, Warton seems to have considered him the pioneer, and thereby lost the opportunity of correctly explaining the difference between him and Wyatt.

³'I know of no English critic besides [Ascham], who has mentioned Surrey's Virgil, except Bolton, a great reader of old English books.' *Hist. Eng. Poetry*, III, p. 24, note p.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 24.

upon the lips even of the Merry Wives of Windsor.* It is not surprising to see Warton find the secret of the tremendous vogue of classical stories in the attractions of their unusual fictions for the romance-loving English poet, so that the 'extravagancies' of these 'fabulous inventions' were imitated before 'their natural beauties,' 'regularity of design and justness of sentiment,' were perceived.

In the *Mirror for Magistrates* Warton found all the important influences upon the sixteenth century combined in a work that had the added significance of forming a link connecting this tradition with Spenser. Singling out the description of hell in Sackville's *Induction* as the most striking part of the whole, he made a comparative study of its relation to its sources which included Homer, Virgil and Dante, and was a conspicuous example of the comparative method of criticism which he alone of his contemporaries adequately valued⁸ or was able to achieve.⁹ That the *Inferno* was included in the comparison shows too the extent of the historian's scholarship in an age when wide knowledge of Italian was rare, and Dante was held in much less respect than Tasso or Aristo.¹⁰ Here again Warton's taste for mediæval poetry enabled him to appreciate a poet whose predominating characteristics were mediæval,

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 494.

⁹*Ibid.*

⁸Ritson is perhaps an extreme example. He showed his complete inability even to appreciate the comparative method when, in his *Observations on the three first volumes of the History of English Poetry*, he asked, 'What possible connection is there between the *Divina Comedia*, and the History of English Poetry?' p. 38.

⁹Professor Saintsbury, who never does full justice to Warton, credits Gray alone of English critics of this century with the ability to use the comparative method; but certainly Gray has left less evidence of it than has Warton. *History of Criticism*, III, p. 462.

¹⁰Paget Toynbee's valuable assemblage of references to Dante in the eighteenth century shows at a glance the meagerness of eighteenth century knowledge of Dante, so that Warton appears as the largest contributor to general acquaintance with the *Divine Comedy* before the translation in 1782. *Dante in English Literature from Chaucer to Cary*, 2 vols. New York, 1909.

But Mr. Toynbee is not quite fair to Warton, and does not recognize the qualitative as well as quantitative difference in his criticism.

An anonymous contributor to the *Edinburgh Review* for July, 1833, in a review of Wright's translation of the *Inferno*, appreciated the relation of Warton's work to the prevailing ignorance of Dante. He said: 'The *Divine Comedy* was still a sealed volume in scholastic libraries, when the two Wartons, who had some life in them during one of the deadest periods of our literature, distinguished themselves by their endeavours to attract to it the attention of the English public. So little was it known, that Thomas Warton introduced an analysis of it in his history of English Poetry.' Vol. 57, p. 420.

and helped him to discover that the *Divine Comedy* had 'sublimity' even in its 'absurdities', and 'originality of invention' in its 'grossest improprieties'.¹¹ He declared that the poem had a classical groundwork decorated with 'many Gothic and extravagant innovations', and pointed out that 'the charms which we so much admire in Dante, do not belong to the Greeks and Romans. They are derived from another origin, and must be traced back to a different stock.'¹²

Warton's method of comparing the ideas of various poets and studying their influence upon one another is altogether different from the 'parallel-passage-and-plagiarism mania'¹³ which seized his contemporaries when they undertook comparisons. In comparing the *Inferno* and Sackville's *Induction*, he sharpened the distinction by a clear exposition of the characteristic merits of each. The power of vivid description of allegorical, or at least of abstract, characters, so that they appear more like real than imaginary personages, he justly considered Sackville's peculiar gift, a gift he passed on to Spenser,¹⁴ and thereby 'greatly enlarged the former narrow bounds of our ideal imagery.'¹⁵

An historian with a marked and indulged curiosity about every field of literature could not, of course, leave Sackville without discussing the classical tragedy in which he had a share, especially when he recognized it as 'perhaps the first specimen in our language of an heroic tale, written in blank verse, divided into acts and scenes, and cloathed in all the formalities of a regular tragedy.'¹⁶ And since by the third volume the reader has lost any desire he may once have cherished to hold Warton strictly to his subject, he welcomes each valuable digression. The discussion of *Gorboduc* is justified by its close connection with the revival of classical learning and with the history of the drama.¹⁷ Moreover the comment upon *Gorboduc* as a tragedy is a sound piece of criticism, indicating a theory of tragedy based upon a judicious combination of classical and romantic practice, which one wishes had been more fully developed. When Warton upheld the moral purpose of tragedy, he wished not 'the intermixture of moral sentences,' but 'pathetic and critical situations,' 'force of example,' and 'the effect of the story'; and he insisted that 'sentiment and argument will never supply the place

¹¹*Hist. Eng. Poetry*, III, p. 241.

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 255.

¹³Saintsbury, *Hist. Crit.* III, p. 70. Warton censured this abuse in his *Obs. on the F. Q.* ed. cit. II, p. 1.

¹⁴See also *Obs. F. Q.* II, pp. 101-3.

¹⁵*Hist. Eng. Poetry*, III, p. 233.

¹⁶*Ibid.* III, p. 355.

¹⁷*Ibid.* p. 372, ff.

of action upon the stage.¹⁸ He required that classical restraint of language be combined with vivid and consistent characterization and importance and complexity of plot, and that all should contribute to dramatic action. Occasional references to Shakespeare show that Warton recognized his 'eternal dominion over the hearts of mankind',¹⁹ and that he condemned his violations of the unities of time and place, defects which the critic says 'he covers by the magic of his poetry.'²⁰ Warton further declared that 'Shakespeare's genius alone' was able 'to triumph and to predominate' over the 'extravagancies' and 'barbarous ideas of [his] times.'²¹

It has been said that Warton explained the popularity and the power of the Italian and classical translations and imitations by the initial appeal of their fictions to the English fondness for stories, which had survived from the mediæval age. But he would not have it thought that the romantic tradition survived only as a taste for extravagant fictions; numerous printed editions of old romances in modernized versions²² proved the vitality of the romances themselves, and the *Nut browne Maide*, considered as a *sixteenth* century poem, showed him that creative power had not wholly declined. This error in date,²⁴ which is easily explained by Warton's arguments for its modernity, is of less significance than his genuine and un-Augustan enthusiasm for the poem. The wide interval that separates Warton from the old school is clearly shown by the contrast between his estimate of the poem and Prior's conventional imitation of it, and Dr. Johnson's opinion of them. Dr. Johnson had sternly condemned the story for its low morality, and said that it 'deserves no imitation', and, finding no merit in the theme, he dismissed Prior's poem as a 'dull and tedious dialogue.'²⁵ Warton, on the other hand, with a far more catholic taste, admired the simplicity, warm sentiment, and skilful construction of the older poem, and deplored the fact that Prior's garbled version had 'misconceived and essentially marred his poet's design.'²⁶

¹⁸*Ibid.* pp. 362-3.

¹⁹*Ibid.* p. 362.

²⁰*Ibid.* p. 358.

²¹*Ibid.* p. 435.

²²*Ibid.* pp. 58, 142.

²³Fairly familiar to eighteenth century readers from Prior's version, *Henry and Emma*, in *Poems on Several Occasions*, 1709, and its inclusion in Capel's *Prolusions*, 1760, and Percy's *Reliques*, 1765.

²⁴He could not have made the mistake had he known the first edition of Arnold's *Chronicle*, (1502?) instead of only the second, 1525.

²⁵*Life of Prior*, Johnson's *Works*, Ed. cit. III, p. 619.

²⁶*Hist. Eng. Poetry*, III, p. 140.

In considering the Italian, classical and romantic traditions as the dominant influences upon the great poetical revival in Elizabeth's reign, Warton did not by any means overlook such other important influences not primarily literary as the protestant reformation and the new nationalism, nor did he pass over such related subjects as the development of English prose and the rise of criticism; for he was always quick to see the close relation of literature to the environment in which it was produced, and to study the effect of political and religious movements upon it. His historical sense caught the immediate effect of the reformation upon poetry at the same time that his religious instincts and poetical taste were offended by the atrocious verse of the 'mob of religious rhymers, who, from principles of the most unfeigned piety, devoutly laboured to darken the lustre, and enervate the force, of the divine pages.'²⁷ His frequently expressed disgust with many practices of the protestant reformers did not, however, prevent his making a really thorough study of the origins of reformation poetry,—the popular adaptations of psalms of the French free-thinker, Clement Marot, the popularizing of religion, and the need of a substitute for the religious forms abolished by the rigid Calvinists.²⁸ Yet he would have been no true critic if he had not seen that this 'new mode of universal psalmody' was unworthy of the name of poetry, and no true son of the established church if he had not resented the substitution of a bare 'mental intercourse with the deity' for the impressive beauty of church ceremonies. Nor could his keen sense of humour miss the opportunity to expose the absurdity of more than one 'dignified fanatic's divine poetry' by putting it in juxtaposition with an '*ungodlike* ballad' in the same doggerel metre,—from which inevitable comparison the rollicking *Back and side go bare* suffered least.²⁹

While Warton realized that the religious and political ferment of the middle of the sixteenth century was on the whole unfavourable at first to poetry, he found one important new poetic interest growing out of it. The first indication of the awakening of interest in the national history as a subject for poetry he found in Sackville's *Mirror for Magistrates* and its numerous continuations. And it was only by the judicious application of the historical method that the importance of a poem of relatively slight intrinsic value could have been discovered. Warton fully appreciated the added richness that was given to English poetry through the opening up of the field of English history; he realized the value of the mass of material that had long been 'shut up in the Latin

²⁷*Ibid.* III, p. 194.

²⁸*Ibid.* III, pp. 161-205.

²⁹*Ibid.* III, pp. 206-8.

narratives of the monkish annalists,' and placed the *Mirror for Magistrates* near the beginning of that literary movement which produced Drayton's *Heroical Epistles* and Warner's *Albion's England* and culminated in Shakespeare's historical plays. He did not consider the *Mirror for Magistrates* the source of the others, but simply the first 'poetical use of the English chronicles.'³⁰

Warton could not leave the discussion of the English renaissance without at least mentioning that it was not wholly poetical, but that the 'cultivation of an English [prose] style began to be now regarded,'³¹ and that the inevitable result was the rise of conscious and deliberate literary criticism. And it is characteristic that he should have traced the development of English prose to Ascham's desire to show 'how a subject might be treated with grace and propriety in English as well as in Latin,'³¹ and that he should have compared the rise of criticism in England with its earlier development in France and Italy, with which he was really familiar. It is at the same time indicative of his estimation of the function of criticism that he should have feared that, in the absence of critical treatises, while writers were entirely unhampered by canons of taste or rules of correct composition and 'every man indulged his own capriciousness of invention', although poetry gained in variety and flexibility, there was danger that 'selection and discrimination' be 'often overlooked,' that sublimity be mingled with triviality, and that liberty become license.³²

In concluding the third volume with a recapitulation of the tendencies that dominated 'the golden age of English poetry,' Warton showed his just estimation of the contribution from each source, and the modification each underwent in becoming part of the complex whole. This summary is the more significant because it shows distinctly what he considered the essentials of such an age, and therefore implies his explanation of the lack of poetry in his own day. Having always recognized imagination as a first requisite of pure poetry, and realizing, as his pseudo-classical contemporaries did not, that the romantic fictions of the middle ages made as powerful an appeal to the imagination and feelings as the traditions of classical antiquity, and perceiving too that they are not necessarily incompatible, he could show that it was an inestimable gain to the Elizabethan age that it combined the beauties of both, that poetry reached its highest development in England before reason and science had so far advanced upon art that intellectual qualities prevailed over imaginative. The nice balance between two intoler-

³⁰*Ibid.* III, pp. 259-282.

³¹*Ibid.* III, pp. 329-354.

³²*Ibid.* III, p. 499.

able extremes—undisciplined imagination and cold reason—which has been but rarely reached, has seldom been more clearly conceived than by Warton, and is aptly described in the closing words of his description of the great poetic age, 'when genius was rather directed than governed by judgement, and when taste and learning had so far only disciplined imagination, as to suffer its excesses to pass without censure or controul, for the sake of the beauties to which they were allied.'³³

The fourth volume, which was to have completed the history, although repeatedly promised,³⁴ was never finished. Yet it was never wholly abandoned, and at the time of Warton's death it was supposed that it could be completed by his brother Joseph from the materials that Thomas had collected. The printer, Daniel Prince, sent the eleven sheets, eighty-eight pages, which he had already printed of the fourth volume, to Dr. Warton, who had collected all his brother's papers and taken them to Winchester with the expectation of putting them in order and finishing the volume. Unfortunately, however, the historian had never made very careful notes, as a result of his habit of writing directly for the press after he had assembled all his material, trusting much, no doubt, to his memory. There was therefore probably little manuscript that could be used by another. And his brother increased the confusion of the material by cramming the papers all together in disorder.³⁵ Joseph made efforts to complete the work,³⁶ but, not being imbued with equal enthusiasm for the subject nor endowed with equal ability—he complained that the ground left for him to go over was 'so beaten'!—the task proved too much for him.

The reasons why Warton never finished the history are not hard to find. About the time the third volume was finished, he must have

³³*Ibid.* III, p. 501.

³⁴Letter to Price, Oct. 13, 1781. 'I have lately been working hard; have made some progress in my fourth volume.' Mant, I, p. lxxviii.

Prince to Gough, Aug. 4, 1783. 'Mr. Warton's 'History of English Poetry' will be at press again at Michaelmass next.' Nichols: *Lit. Anec.* III, p. 696.

In the edition of Milton's Minor Poems, 1785, the speedy publication of the fourth volume was announced.

³⁵*Ibid.* p. 702.

³⁶Joseph Warton to Hayley, March 12, 1792. 'At any leisure I get busied in finishing the last volume of Mr. Warton's History of English Poetry, which I have engaged to do—for the booksellers are clamorous to have the book finished (tho' the ground I am to go over is so beaten) that it may be a complete work.' Wooll, p. 404.

Prince insinuates that Joseph had the greater incentive to finish the work since a large part of the copy-money had been withheld until it should be finished, and he was already disappointed that his brother had left him no money. Nichols: *Lit. Anec.* III, pp. 702-3.

begun his edition of Milton's Minor Poems, the final expression of a life-long attachment to Milton, and in the same year that it was published, he was made poet laureate and Camden Professor of History at Oxford, which honours, though they exacted no arduous duties, helped to distract his energy from the history. Very likely too the fact that in an earlier work he had already discussed Spenser, who would have made a large part in the fourth volume, made him the more willing to turn to a, for him, new field. Therefore, just as he had failed to carry every other of his works to the point of completion originally planned, without ever quite abandoning the history, he probably never took it up with any resolute intention of completing it, after the publication of the third volume.

Some of his contemporaries seem, however, to have found a more specific and less worthy reason for its virtual abandonment. Dr. Percy and his friend Thomas Caldecott, a fellow of New College who knew Warton personally, seem to have entertained the notion that he was influenced by the scurrilous attack of the antiquary Ritson³⁷ to relinquish his plan. Warton's biographer, however, asserts on the authority of 'an intimate friend of Mr. Warton' that he 'neither allowed the justness, nor felt, though he might lament, the keenness of the censure.'³⁸ The following letter to George Steevens shows that he was disposed to treat the attack with contemptuous silence, although he felt he could answer most of the objections.

Dear Sir

I am greatly obliged to you for your Information about the Author of the quarto Pamphlet³⁹ written against me in two Letters, the first dated at Emmanuel College, the second at Hampstead. What a universal Caviller and Corrector! But surely, whatever may be done with a previous and separate piece of criticism, no bookseller will be found absurd enough to contract for a new edition of Shakespeare

³⁷Percy to Caldecott, Aug. 17, 1803. 'I certainly think with you, that the personal abuse of poor mad Ritson was the highest honour he could do me, and can only regret that it deprived us of the ingenious labours of "honest Tom Warton." I assure you it would have had no such influence on me.' Nichols: *Lit. Illus.* VIII, pp. 372-3.

A similar notion seems to have inspired a curious and somewhat obscure caricature printed in London in 1805, which is thus described by Andrew Caldwell in a letter to Percy: Ritson 'is surrounded with carrots and cabbages, and on the ground lies the *Reliques*. A print of poor Warton, with a knife and fork stuck in his belly; the meaning of this I do not understand.' *Ibid.* VIII, p. 62.

³⁸Mant, p. lxviii. See also Thomas Park's *Advertisement* of his edition of Ritson's *English Songs*. London, 1813.

³⁹Ritson: *Observations on the three first volumes of the History of English Poetry in a familiar letter to the author*, 1782.

after your's.⁴⁰ I could disprove most of his objections were it a matter of any Consequence. To speak to one here, Dr. Farmer suggested to me the Calculation concerning the *Gesta Alexandri* printed by Corsellis, showing that the (MS. burnt) was completed at Priss on a Sunday.⁴¹ I (MS. burnt) told the Pamphlet⁴² makes some way a C(MS. burnt)ge, under the Auspices of Dr. Glyn(-)e. But it (MS. burnt) is too heavy to move much. Wh(MS. burnt) ay, Dean Milles⁴³ was here in (MS. burnt), for a week, I found on my Table on my Return hither, a present of Ritson's Quarto 'with Compliments from the Author.' We will have your new Rowley Anecdotes when we meet in town after Xmas.

I am, Dear Sir, your most faithful humble servant,
T. Warton.

Oxon. Nov. 8, 1782.⁴⁴

Later he was drawn into the controversy that was waged in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, and probably even contributed a letter himself.⁴⁵

⁴⁰In April, 1783, Steevens wrote to Warton, 'No less than six editions of *Shakespear* (including Capell's Notes, with Collins' prolegomena) are now in the mash-tub.' Wooll, p. 398. Ritson projected an edition, but printed only a few sheets in 1787. See *Appendix to Remarks Critical and Illustrative*, 1783.

⁴¹Ritson: *Observations*, etc., p. 15, and *Hist. Eng. Poetry*, II, p. 8, note h.

⁴²*An Essay on the Evidence . . . relating to the Poems attributed to Rowley*. . . by Matthias, 1783.

⁴³Editor of the Rowley poems, 1782, and defender of their antiquity.

⁴⁴Bodleian MSS. Montagu D. 2 fol. 48.

⁴⁵Nov. 3, 1782. *Lit. Illus.* IV, p. 739. See also *Lit. Anec.* VI, p. 182.

CHAPTER VIII

CRITICAL RECEPTION OF THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH POETRY

It is interesting to see how a work, addressed to two classes of readers, the man of taste and the antiquary, and written by a man who belonged strictly to neither, was received by typical members of each. Both classes of contemporary readers, as will be expected, were out of sympathy with Warton's enthusiasm for his subject and failed to appreciate his valuable new methods. Horace Walpole, who posed as an antiquary, but whose bits of information on ancient matters were decidedly amateurish compared with the strict studies and exact knowledge of the serious antiquarians, hailed the first volume of Warton's history with delight: 'It seems delightfully full of things I love;'¹ but his enthusiasm was scarcely sufficient to survive the reading of it. He granted that the particulars were entertaining, but maintained that the amassing of 'all the parts and learning of four centuries' simply produced the impression 'that those four ages had no parts or learning at all. There is not a gleam of poetry in their compositions between the Scalds and Chaucer.'² The result, so unsatisfactory to a man with Walpole's Augustan taste in poetry, he was inclined to blame, quite unjustly, upon the author's plan rather than upon his own lack of interest in the earlier history of poetry. 'In short,' he wrote to Mason, 'it may be the genealogy of versification with all its intermarriages and anecdotes of the family; but Gray's and your plan might still be executed. I am sorry Mr. Warton has contracted such an affection for his materials, that he seems almost to think that not only Pope but Dryden himself have added few beauties to Chaucer.'³

The second volume wearied him still more. 'I have very near finished Warton,' he wrote, 'but, antiquary as I am, it was a tough achievement. He has dipped into an incredible ocean of dry and obsolete authors of the dark ages, and has brought up more rubbish than riches, but the latter chapters, especially on the progress and revival of the theatre, are more entertaining; however it is very fatiguing to wade through the muddy poetry of three or four centuries that had never a poet.'⁴ With the third volume Walpole's antiquarian pose dropped away completely. If Mr. Warton was going to consider the

¹Letter to Mason, March 23, 1774. Walpole's *Letters*, Ed. cit., VIII, p. 432.

²Letter to Mason, April 7, 1774. *Ibid.*, p. 440.

³*Ibid.*

⁴Letter to Mason, April 18, 1778. *Ibid.* X, pp. 222-23.

Nut Brown Maid better than Prior's imitation, he must feel alarmed at the drift of criticism. He expressed his contempt for Warton's taste in admiring such verse and his judgment in devoting so much attention to those barren centuries in English literary history in no mild terms. But his criticism is a boomerang which returns upon his own inability to appreciate the merits of Warton's history without having discovered the faults which undoubtedly do exist. 'This,' he said, 'is the third immense history of the life of poetry, and still poetry is not yet born, for Spenser will not appear till the fourth tome. I perceive it is the certain fate of an antiquary to become an old fool.'⁵ Mason, in the same spirit, deplored Warton's 'antiquarian mud,' and thought that the best that was to be hoped for the history was that a selection of anecdotes might be made from it.⁶

From the other class of readers came the savage attacks of the antiquarian Ritson, who, approaching Warton's work from the opposite direction, failed as completely as the men of taste to point out its chief faults and to appreciate its timely as well as enduring value. Ritson was 'merely an antiquarian' and a very bad-tempered one: he had no taste for poetry, no interest in literary criticism; he combined, however, a genuine passion for exact research with an unscholarly acerbity of temper and virulence of abuse. His *Observations on the three first volumes of the History of English Poetry. In a familiar letter to the author*, published anonymously in 1782, with characteristic affrontery was printed 'in the size of MR. WARTON'S HISTORY' as a 'useful APPENDIX' to 'that celebrated work.' After an introduction full of mock deference and covert contempt, Ritson indicated the line of his attack. 'Whether you have gratified "the reader of taste," by your exertions on this subject, I know not; but of this I am confident, that "the antiquarian" will have greater reason to be dissatisfied with being perplexed or misled, than to thank you for having engaged in a task for which it will appear you have been so little qualified.'

Ritson's accurate antiquarian knowledge, though inspired by the most execrable of bad tempers, was able to collect only one hundred charges of varying degrees of seriousness and importance against Warton's history, certainly a very small number to be gleaned from three quarto volumes, 1761 pages in all. The specific points criticized range from an attack on Warton's excuse for neglecting the Anglo-Saxon period—that it was not connected with the nature and purpose of his

⁵Letter to Mason, March 9, 1781. *Ibid*, XI, p. 412.

⁶Letter to Walpole, March 20, 1781. Quoted from Moulton's *Library of Literary Criticism*, 1910, IV, p. 73.

⁷*Observations*, etc., p. (3).

undertaking (a fault that Warton obviously felt and that Ritson unfairly exaggerated by lifting from its context)—to inaccuracy in dates of manuscripts, inexact quotations, incorrect glosses, and, most serious of all, the charge of plagiarism. The accusation that Warton was not always accurate may be admitted, though with the qualification that his inaccuracy is generally greatly overestimated and was much more frequently due to the inevitable impossibility of ascertaining exactly every date and meaning and manuscript reading in so huge a work and in the infancy of the study of those subjects than to any culpable lack of care on the hitsorian's part.

The charge of plagiarizing is more serious, and, since greater heed is usually given to such an accusation than to the ill-nature that inspired it or to the possibility of oversight in transcribing a large number of references, Warton seems to need a more extended defense at this point. Ritson made two explicit charges of this sort and indulged in a good deal of innuendo. It must be admitted that three notes to Warton's text of Douglas's *Description of May*⁸ correspond to those of Fawkes's edition, published in 1752, and the conclusion that Fawkes was the source of Warton's notes is pretty obvious, but that scarcely justifies Ritson's acrimonious 'each of THESE NOTES, as you [Warton] well know, is STOLEN VERBATUM from the late Mr. Fawkeses Imitation of Douglas.'⁹ And again, when Warton had apparently taken an explanation of the *Hundred Merry Tales*, the supposed source of Beatrice's wit in *Much Ado about Nothing*, as the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*, from Steevens's edition of Shakespeare, Ritson's 'I found that, according to your usual and laudable custom, you had been pecking and pilfering from Mr. Steevens's notes upon it,' goes beyond the deserts of the case. It is easily conceivable that references should have been omitted by oversight or accidental loss. The wonder is that there are not many more such accidental omissions. And Warton's evident care to quote the exact references to his sources in his foot-notes makes deliberate dishonesty extremely unlikely.

Ritson's temper is even uglier when he charges Warton with copying a poem from Percy's ballads and then asserting in the notes that he had transcribed it from the original in the British Museum and written the explanations before he knew that it was printed in Percy's collection, giving colour to the accusation by the fact that the same mistakes—including the omission of a stanza—occur in both transcripts.¹⁰ We have here a question of Warton's word against Ritson's, with a

⁸*Hist. Eng. Poetry*, II, pp. 284, 285, and 286, notes.

⁹*Observations*, p. (24).

¹⁰*Ibid.* p. (5-6).

considerable weight of bad temper on one side and a simple and common explanation, such as is usually accepted at its face value, on the other, and with the possibility of a perfectly plausible explanation that both Percy and Warton received their transcripts from a common copyist.¹¹

After his assembly of one hundred and sixteen mostly petty errors in Warton's history, Ritson concluded with an insulting attack upon the whole, unworthy of a scholar of Ritson's ability and, it would seem, so far overshooting the mark as to destroy its intended effect. 'If your collections had been authentic, though of themselves no history, nor capable, in your hands, of becoming one, they might at least have been useful to some subsequent writer better qualified for the purpose. But we see (as has been here sufficiently proved) you are not to be relied on in a single instance [a generalization for which he at least had given slight basis]; the work being a continued tissue of falsehood from beginning to end. Suffer me, as a friend,—to your subject, at least,—to recommend' that you revise the whole, 'That the work may not remain a monument of disgrace to yourself and your country.'¹²

Although Mant insisted upon Warton's contempt of this attack,¹³ his friends resented it and engaged in a fierce war of words with Ritson in which they showed ability equal to Ritson's without his spleen. Ritson seems never to have abated his abuse of Warton,¹⁴ although after his death he expressed an intention to 'treat his ashes with the reverence I ought possibly to have bestowed on his person;' and a regret that he had been 'introduced, not always in the most serious or respectful manner,' in a recently written work.¹⁵

¹¹It is, of course, too much to suppose that Warton personally made all the research necessary for so huge a work unassisted and in the comparatively short time he must have given to the work, and that not wholly free from other interests. His letters indicate that he received much assistance from obliging friends, e.g. letter to Price, August 18, 1780 (Mant, p. lxxviii) and to Percy, February 22, 1776, *supra*.

¹²*Observations*, p. (48).

¹³Op. cit. I, p. lxxviii.

¹⁴Mant supposed his strictures somewhat softened in the preface to *Minot's Poems* (Anon. 1795) but the references to Warton there seem to me no less hostile, though perhaps somewhat thinly veiled by irony. 'Its author,' he says of the historian, 'confident in great and splendid abilities, would seem to have disdained the too servile task of cultivating the acquaintance of ancient dialect or phraseology, and to have contented himself with publishing, and occasionally attempting to explain, what, it must be evident, he did not himself understand.' Pref. ed. cit., p. ix.

¹⁵Letter to Walker, June 25, 1790. Ritson's *Letters*, ed. Nicolas, London, 1833. I, p. 169. See also Thomas Park's *Advertisement* to his edition of Ritson's *English Songs*, London, 1813.

Although it may appear from the opinions just quoted that Warton failed to please both classes of readers to whom he had appealed in his preface,—that he was not entertaining enough for the man of taste nor accurate enough for the antiquary,—it must not be assumed that the work failed to have even an immediate success.¹⁶ Besides the caution that Walpole was too much an Augustan in his taste for poetry and Ritson too ill-tempered in his hostility toward every other antiquary to be a very competent judge of Warton's history, it is even more important to recognize that Warton had a higher ideal than simply to please either the man of taste, or the antiquary, or both. He aspired to write the history of English poetry, and he took a broader and more comprehensive and at the same time more single view of his subject than either type of reader was able to comprehend. That he aspired to be, and was, something more than the mere man of taste is obvious; that he was something more than a mere antiquary has not always been so fully recognized. The distinction is one he recognized clearly himself,¹⁷ and there were some of his contemporaries who realized that in this work he combined the enthusiasm of a poet, the discrimination of a critic, the research of an antiquary, the broad view of an historian, and the genuine human interest of a teacher, and that it was this rich blending of qualities that made his history transcend its faults and become a 'classic'¹⁸ upon its first appearance. 'This elegant writer,' said the reviewer for the *Gentleman's Magazine*, 'already well known to the learned world as a poet, a critic, and an antiquarian, opposite as those characters seem to be, has here in some measure united them all.'¹⁹ The *Monthly Review* not only described the history as a 'capital work, . . . replete with entertainment and erudition,'²⁰ but even showed some appreciation of its less obvious merits: 'It is not Mr. Warton's principal merit, that he investigates his subject with the patience of an antiquary and the acuteness of a critic; from his accurate delineation of character, it is evident, that he has inspected the manners of mankind . . . with the penetrating eye of a philosopher.'²¹ Gibbon appreciated the value of his study of 'the progress of romance, and the state

¹⁶Mant said that he had heard that the copyright was sold for 350*l*, and that 'such was the confidence of the proprietors in the sale of it, that the impression consisted of 1250 copies.' *Op. cit.*, p. liii.

¹⁷He dismissed Harding's *Chronicle* as 'almost beneath criticism, and fit only for the attention of an antiquary.' *Hist. Eng. Poetry*, II, p. 127.

¹⁸C. K. Adams: *A Manual of Historical Literature*, 1882, p. 501.

¹⁹1774, Vol. XLIV, p. 370.

²⁰1774, Vol. 50, p. 297.

²¹1782, Vol. 66, p. 162.

of learning, in the middle ages,' which he said were illustrated 'with the taste of a poet, and the minute diligence of an antiquarian.'²²

Sir Walter Scott, who combined some qualities of both the man of taste and the antiquary with a creative imagination that both they and Warton lacked, showed in his appreciation of the spirit of the past for the sake of its share in the reality of the present,²³—a departure from the earlier study of the past for its own sake which marked the antiquary,—a romanticism that seems to emanate from Warton's *History of English Poetry* and its vitalization of the life of the middle ages.²⁴ Scott's criticism of Warton's history is pretty just, except that he could not, of course, quite appreciate Warton's contribution in the way of inaugurating modern methods of criticism. After regretting the neglect of system which he said resulted from the writer's too great interest in the fascinating details of his subject, he concluded, 'Accordingly, Warton's "History of English Poetry" has remained, and will always remain, an immense common-place book of *memoirs to serve for such an history*. No antiquary can open it, without drawing information from a mine which, though dark, is inexhaustible in its treasures; nor will he who reads merely for amusement ever shut it for lack of attaining his end; while both may probably regret the desultory excursions of an author, who wanted only system, and a more rigid attention to minute accuracy, to have perfected the great task he has left incomplete.'²⁵

²²*History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Philadelphia 1871, 6 vols. III, p. 624.

²³C. H. Herford, in *The Age of Wordsworth*, London, 1909, distinguishes two types of romantic mediævalism, 'the one pursuing the image of the past as a refuge from reality, the other as portion of it; the mediævalism of Tieck and the mediævalism of Scott.' (Intro. xxiv, note.) He might have added the mediævalism from which they both sprang, which pursued the past for its own sake (and was not properly romantic), the mediævalism of the antiquary, of Thomas Hearne.

²⁴There were of course other large factors in Scott's romanticism and there was little conscious debt to Warton. But there is unquestionably a close resemblance between the two men and in other respects than the one just mentioned, the similarity of their approach to the past, their enthusiastic love of the middle ages, combined with and even depending upon a firm grasp on reality. Their qualities differ more in degree than in kind. Warton and Scott have similar antiquarian interests—more human than scholarly perhaps—similar love for the architectural art of the past, as well as for the life whose monument it is. They had also common unromantic qualities: strong common sense, geniality of temper and love of sociability, tremendous energy, and conservatism in politics, religion and morality.

²⁵Scott: *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*, 1804. I, p. 11. Quoted from Moulton's *Library of Literary Criticism*, IV, p. 73.

More adequate realization of the value of Warton's history came only as modern scholarly research pursued the path which he had first pointed out, and attained thereby results which over-topped his only because built upon them. But many of his successors have shown the common disposition to 'scorn the base degrees by which they did ascend', and have looked upon but one side of the matter, comparing Warton's achievement in any particular branch of his large subject with their own in a much smaller one. They forget the difficulties that he encountered,—that he had not the inspiration of general interest, that authentic sources were almost inaccessible, that scholarly methods were undefined, that even the mechanical aids of book and manuscript catalogues, bibliographies, and dictionaries were lacking. There is an unfortunate tendency to blame Warton for the defects of his age, for not having accomplished the impossible—not only in his own day, but, as yet, in ours. Two short quotations will show the improved yet still incomplete appreciation of the merits of the history. 'He saw, by anticipation, some of the fruits which the comparative method might be made to yield; and, as a consequence, although he essayed a task too large for any man,²⁶ and achieved what is doubtless an ill-arranged and ill-proportioned fragment, yet he left the impress of his independent thought and of his vigorous grasp upon our literature, and traced the lines upon which its history must be written.'²⁷ 'But Warton's learning was wide, if not exact; and it was not dry learning, but quickened by the spirit of a genuine man of letters. Therefore, in spite of its obsolescence in matters of fact, his history remains readable, as a body of descriptive criticism, or a continuous literary essay.'²⁸

The tendency just mentioned of many modern critics to find fault with Warton's history on the score of lack of system and inaccuracies in detail is criticism beside the point. Even granting that their charges be true,—they are certainly exaggerated,—they detract little from the value of the history in its own day, or its importance in ours. Hazlitt reached the height of folly in this sort of criticism when he said, 'It was his rare good fortune to be enabled to take possession of the field at a period when there was absolutely no competitor in sight,'²⁹ and charged him with indolence, carelessness and ignorance,—criticism which reflects more upon the critic than upon his subject. Its author failed to take any account of Warton's milieu. Looked at with the

²⁶For which he had examples enough in the encyclopedic works of his century.

²⁷Craik: *English Prose*, 1906. Introduction, IV, p. 8.

²⁸Beers: *A History of English Romanticism in the Eighteenth Century*, 1910, p. 205.

²⁹Hazlitt's edition of Warton's *History*, 4 vols. London, 1871. Preface, p. viii.

proper perspective his indolence becomes tremendous energy, his carelessness, scrupulous regard for detail, and his ignorance, astonishing breadth and accuracy of information and surprising felicity of conjecture. The task that Warton undertook was beyond the accomplishment of any other man in that age, and one that few men since have ventured upon, and the emendations that many of the best scholars (of this particular sort) of the last century and a half have been accumulating about Warton's text are far less numerous and important than some of them would have us believe.

Warton may be best defended against the most persistent charges of his critics, those of inaccuracy and indolence, by a brief survey of the sources from which he drew the materials of his history as he indicated them in his foot-notes, showing their great number, their wide range, their authority, and the way he used them. Misleading as figures may be, a few will, I think, be illuminating with respect to the work before me. There are in the notes nearly four thousand references to authorities consulted in the preparation of the history, exclusive of glossarial notes, illustrative passages and cross-references to other poets, and bibliographical notes upon the works under discussion, all of which are very numerous and of course entailed a tremendous amount of work. Of the references thus considered approximately seven hundred are to manuscript sources of information, nearly a thousand to historical or critical works,⁸⁰—more than fifteen hundred different authorities consulted.

It is impossible to give an adequate idea of the variety of books included in Warton's citations, 'all such reading as never was read' and much of it now not only superseded but forgotten. I can mention here only a few of those most frequently referred to and most representative of the range of authorities cited, but anyone who will give even a few minutes to the study of the foot-notes in the first editions of the history will have a clearer idea of the difficulties of the task and the merit of the accomplishment. The historical sources include the antiquarians, literary, historical and ecclesiastical, that abounded in the preceding centuries, from Bale and Leland to Tanner and Hearne, from Holinshed and Stowe to Lyttleton and Hume, and from Fox and Spelman to Strype and Oudin; they include glossaries of many languages, those of Herbelot, DuCange and Carpentier, and Hickes; they include histories of foreign as well as English literature, Fauchett, Pasquier, Fontenelle and St. Palaye, among many others for France, Muratori

⁸⁰See bibliography of sources. A summer spent poring over the venerable tomes that Warton used has increased the writer's respect for his thoroughness.

and Crescembeni for Italy, Bartholin, Pontoppidan, and Mallet for Denmark, and hosts of others that defy classification.³¹

Very naturally it is the historical compilations that are most frequently cited, but always with a discriminating sense of their value; Warton depended on them usually for historical facts merely; his conclusions and interpretations were his own. In the case of many writers whom he has quoted frequently he has left an opinion of the author's work which shows the dependence he placed upon him. The author from whose very numerous editions of old texts he quoted most frequently is Thomas Hearne, 'to whose diligence,' he said, 'even the poetical antiquarian is much obliged, but whose conjectures are generally wrong.'³² Leland he recognized as 'one of the most classical scholars of [his] age.'³³ Of Wood, though he is frequently quoted, I find no further characterization than a reference to 'his usual acrimony.'³⁴ 'Bale's narrow prejudices,' he said, 'are well known.'³⁵ Warton recognized the limitations of Bale's principal work while drawing upon it for facts not elsewhere obtainable: 'This work . . . is not only full of misrepresentations and partialities, arising from his religious prejudices, but of general inaccuracies, proceeding from negligence or misinformation. Even those more antient Lives which he transcribes from Leland's commentary on the same subject, are often interpolated with false facts, and impertinently marked with a misapplied zeal for reformation.'³⁶ The 'circumstantial Hollingshed' he characterized as 'an historian not often remarkable for penetration,'³⁷ though his 'formidable

³¹It will be easier to enumerate the authors whom Warton apparently did not consult, and who, it now appears, might have been valuable, but whom we cannot be certain he did not consult, since he may have found nothing to his purpose. Literary sources that we might expect to find cited but do not, are Reynolds: *Mythomestes*, 1632; Walton: *Lives*, 1740-70; Lloyd: *Dictionarium*, 1670; Winstanley: *Lives*, 1687 (its chief source, Philips's *Theatrum*, is quoted); Blount: *Censura*, 1690, and *De Re Poetica*, 1694; [Jacob]: *Poetical Register*, 1719; and, most curious of all, Dryden's critical essays. Although there are many references to Dryden's plays and poems, there are only two minor citations from the prose, the *Preface of the Fables* (*Hist. Eng. Poetry*, I, p. 416), and *Preface to the Spanish Fryer* (III, p. 448), and one general reference without exact citation (III, p. 443).

³²*Hist. Eng. Poetry*, I, p. 87. Hearne is cited 113 times, from different editions of old texts.

³³*Ibid.* III, p. 160. Leland's five principal works are cited 104 times.

³⁴*Ibid.* III, p. 96. Woods two works are cited 77 times.

³⁵*Ibid.* III, p. 316. 'The Puritans never suspected that they were greater bigots than the papists.' Bale is cited 44 times.

³⁶*Ibid.* III, p. 79.

³⁷*Ibid.* I, p. 232. Holinshed's history is quoted 34 times.

columns'³⁸ were full of minute details. He expressed his appreciation of the work of 'the indefatigably inquisitive bishop Tanner,'³⁹ and of the 'manuscript papers of a diligent collector of these fugacious anecdotes,'⁴⁰ Coxeter. Warton was extremely gracious in acknowledging debts to his contemporaries:—'the late ingenious critic,' Percy,⁴¹ 'Monsieur Mallet, a very able and elegant inquirer into the genius and antiquities of the northern nations,'⁴² Tyrwhitt, 'an exact and ingenious critic,'⁴³ 'my late very learned, ingenious, and respected friend, Dr. Borlase,'⁴⁴ 'the reverend and learned doctor Farmer,'⁴⁵ and 'Mr. Price, the Bodleian Librarian, to whose friendship this work is much indebted.'⁴⁶

While Warton availed himself of every accessible source of information, he did not lean unduly upon later and more easily accessible sources. 'I chuse,' he said, passing over a recent memoir, 'to refer to original authorities.'⁴⁷ Again, he blamed himself for depending upon later authorities, feeling that he had thereby fallen into error: 'I take this opportunity of insinuating my suspicions, that I have too closely followed the testimony of Philips, Wood, and Tanner.'⁴⁸ The large number of manuscripts and of early printed books which he quoted with great concern for dates and careful citations of various other editions which he had seen or had found described—he usually discriminates carefully between those he had seen and those he had not, frankly admitting at times that he must quote only at second hand—bear out his statement that he preferred to refer to original sources. His letters to his friends, too, are full of echoes of his quest for copies of rare books, and of his researches in book and manuscript collections in private and public libraries.

This practice of going to original manuscript sources is usually considered today a characteristic of modern scholarship and especially as the method by which modern scholars have surpassed the superficial studies of the eighteenth century.⁴⁹ And the belief is in general correct.

³⁸*Ibid.* III, p. 47.

³⁹*Ibid.* III, p. 429. Tanner is cited 21 times.

⁴⁰*Ibid.* p. 433.

⁴¹*Ibid.* I, Dissertation, I, p. (22). Percy is cited 21 times.

⁴²*Ibid.*

⁴³*Ibid.* III, Dis. III, p. xcii. Tyrwhitt is quoted 11 times.

⁴⁴*Ibid.* I, Diss. I, p. (36) note.

⁴⁵*Ibid.* III, Diss. III, p. iv.

⁴⁶*Ibid.* I, Diss. I, p. (8).

⁴⁷*Ibid.* I, Diss. I, p. (24), note *q*.

⁴⁸*Ibid.* III, p. 293, note *c*.

⁴⁹Bishop Percy's carelessness to preserve the integrity of his ballad MSS. is the stock example of eighteenth century methods.

But it is not often considered how much Warton contributed to introduce and popularize that method in his *History of English Poetry*. Not only the new facts and the possibilities of absolute exactness which he revealed in this way, but his very inaccuracies and misquotations have been a powerful stimulus—to others than Ritson—to the study of old manuscripts. And his calling attention to the wealth of material that lay beyond the reach of the ordinary reader, and even, as in the case of the Gower *Balades*, outside the knowledge of the literary antiquarian, must have been extremely important at a time when general attention was turning toward the treasures of the past.

It cannot be claimed that the result that Warton achieved with all his knowledge, industry, taste, genius, is a perfect history even for the period which it covers. A history of English poetry which will satisfy the scholar's demand for just appreciation of poetical achievement, the historian's demand that the progressive development of poetry shall be portrayed, and which shall, withal, be eminently readable, combining accurate scholarship with literary qualities and popular interest in the best sense,—such a history of English poetry remains to be written. But of the attempts that have been made, the first was not the least effective. It combines in a remarkable degree scholarliness and general interest; a scholarliness remarkably exact for its time, and so accurate in method and general results that errors in detail have been corrected by following its own leading; a general interest that has been wonderfully stimulating to research in special divisions of its field or in related subjects, again in the direction Warton suggested.

The principal contribution made by Warton's history, aside from the facts of literary history which have been discussed in many preceding pages, is in the way of method. He first described the progressive development of poetry, the essential unity of the whole, the relation of part to part and to the whole. It must be admitted of course that in the disproportionate discussion that is given to some aspects of the subject, the relation of part to whole seems to have been lost sight of. It is true that Warton was unable to keep strictly to his subject; he was led aside by his endeavour to treat every aspect fully and then suddenly recalled by a sense of the extent of his plan; he was torn by conflicting desires to treat his subject exhaustively and at the same time broadly and he never succeeded in reconciling that conflict. Romantic love of detail over-mastered classical sense of form but could not obliterate completely his conception of the unity of his whole subject and the continuity of its history. Warton's history was at least and for the first time sufficiently full of the life of poetry to vitalize subsequent study of the subject.

It is only necessary, I think, to recall the fact that Warton was the first to use to any extent not only the historical but also the comparative method. He had shown his clear perception of the close relation between national literatures in his *Observations on the Faerie Queen* twenty years before the first volume of his history appeared. That perception as well as his acquaintance with other literatures had grown during that interval, so that he was able to study mediæval literature with some knowledge and understanding of its essential spirit and of its various modifications and developments in France and Italy, at least, as well as in England, and of the interrelations between them, and to discuss the renaissance in England with an insight such as none of his contemporaries possessed. He did not, to be sure, cover any very considerable portion of his field comparatively; but to have recognized the possibilities of the method, to have shown how it might be used, and to have perceived that only by its use could the history of a national literature be adequately written,—this was of incalculable value in his day, and ours.

The great achievement of Warton's *Observations on the Faerie Queen* was that it established Spenser's reputation on a firm foundation in criticism as well as in poetry and inaugurated a new kind of literary criticism. The *History of English Poetry* contains a number of such achievements. As they have been discussed in detail in the preceding pages, it will be necessary here only to review them. First, of course, should be mentioned the study of mediæval romances, of which, though Warton's theory of origins be inadequate, his understanding of their essential qualities and of their influence upon later literature, is unquestionably penetrating. The studies in the beginning of the drama are almost equally valuable. The discussion of Chaucer is comparable to that of Spenser in the earlier work, and must be considered as contributing greatly to the establishment of that poet's reputation. Warton is certainly as useful and valuable a source for interpretation of Chaucer as the more accurate Tyrwhitt for elucidation of textual difficulties, and here again his work has not been superseded but only continued. The studies of Gower, of Lydgate, of Surrey, of Sackville, and of numberless minors are remarkably illuminating in respect to the quality of the poet's work, his relation to his age, and his contribution to the progress of the whole subject. The digressions on Dante and on the history of criticism in France and Italy have been spoken of as conspicuous examples of comparative study, and as contributing largely to the study of Italian literature. They and the discussion of Scotch poetry and the causes of its difference from English poetry illustrate Warton's growing recognition of the part played by racial characteristics and national temperament in the formation of a national literature.

That Warton's knowledge of literature was not simply an accumulation of 'cumbrous and amorphous learning,'⁸⁰ is shown not only in his comprehension of the relations of part to whole and of the continuous progress of poetry, and his arrangement of his material in general to show that unity and continuity, but it is even more strikingly proved by his ability to turn his knowledge to practical use in determining the period to which a questionable work belonged by the consideration of the literary characteristics of that period and without any technical knowledge of its language. Warton's prompt disposal of the Rowley question meets a practical scholarly test of the best sort in a way that reveals a real mastery of the field.

Judged by the same standards that Warton helped to teach us to apply to literary history, with reference to his inheritance from the past, the influence of the age in which he lived, and the inspiration of his own genius, Warton stands out as easily one of the most important figures of the eighteenth century. He was at the same time the product of his age and of his own genius. From the study of the past he had gained a quickening of the imagination and a sense of that which is enduring and constant in human history as well as a perception of that which changes from age to age; as he belonged to the eighteenth century, he had a strong fund of common sense, clear reasoning powers, an insatiable thirst for knowledge, a wholesome respect for authority; to these, genius enabled him to add poetical insight, rare sympathy, and fresh enthusiasm. These qualities were not always perfectly blended. In particular, the extent of his knowledge often exceeded his ability to reduce it to order; his enthusiasm for a theory sometimes betrayed him into too quick an acceptance or too extended an application; rapidity of composition frequently marred the finished style of which he showed himself at times capable and too often precluded due selection of material. Although Warton was unable to free himself from many of the faults of his age, which he inherited together with its virtues, he added to them many of the conspicuous merits of the next century, which he was able in a remarkable way to anticipate.

⁸⁰Craik: *English Prose*, Introduction, IV, p. 8.

CHAPTER IX

THE POETRY OF AN ANTIQUARY. 1777-1790

Although Warton had apparently abandoned poetry to devote the best years of his life to critical and historical work, the poet was never wholly lost in the scholar; his poetry, though slight, was always his dearest literary offspring. In 1777 he took advantage of his reputation as critic of Spenser and historian of English poetry to collect and publish a small volume of his best verse¹ made up largely of new poems written during the course of more laborious work and showing the influence of his scholarly interests. In this volume of eighty-three pages were published for the first time all of the sonnets but two, most of the odes, including the best ones, *The Grave of King Arthur* and *The Crusade*, and two short pieces, the *Inscription written at a Hermitage, in Anstey Hall, in Warwickshire*, and a *Monody, Written near Stratford on Avon*. Although Dr. Johnson, who disapproved of Warton's poetry even more heartily than he admired his historical work, said of this first edition of his poems, 'This frost has struck them in again,'² the poems were so much admired that another edition³ was published two years later with the addition of a single poem, *The Triumph of Isis*.⁴

¹*Poems A New Edition, with Additions, by Thomas Warton*, London. 1777. The table of contents contains this note, 'The pieces marked with an asterisk were never before printed,' and all but seven of the twenty-five poems are so marked. I am therefore inclined to believe that this was the *first edition* of the poems and that the so-called *third* edition is really the *second*, the *New* in the title of the first being the cause of the confusion. Nathan Drake however, thought, as I once did, that there were two editions in 1777 of which the copy in the British Museum, just described, is the second. *Essays on the Contributors to the Rambler, Adventurer, and Idler*, London 1810, II, p. 174.

²Boswell's *Johnson*, III, p. 158, note.

³*Poems. By Thomas Warton. The Third Edition, corrected*. London, 1779. 97 pages. The volume contained the following advertisement: 'These Poems were collected and published together in 1777. Some of them had before been separately printed, to which other unprinted Pieces were then added. This is the third and a revised Edition of that Collection, with the Addition of one Piece more. March 1, 1779.'

⁴Which Mason had regretted was omitted from the first edition, in a letter to Warton, April 24, 1777. Mant Op. cit. p. xviii.

In 1782 Warton published, but without his name, an eight page pamphlet containing his *Verses on Sir Joshua Reynolds's Painted Window at New College, Oxford*, with this advertisement: 'The following piece was never originally designed for the press, and would not have appeared in public, if it had not been incorrectly circulated in manuscript.' The artist⁵ was delighted with the verses, but with mingled flattery and vanity complained that his own name 'was not hitched in, in the body of the poem. If the titlepage should be lost, it will appear to be addressed to Mr. Jervais.'⁶ His request was of course granted, and for 'artist' the poet substituted the name.

In recognition of his merits as a poet and his distinguished abilities as a man of letters in general, Warton was appointed poet laureate on the death of Whitehead in 1785. Contemporary opinion differed as to whether the honour was conferred on the king's own initiative or on the recommendation of Sir Joshua Reynolds.⁷ The appointment was at least unsought, for Warton, although he did not share Gray's contempt for the office,⁸ had deplored the undignified necessity the laureate was under of writing upon occasion and the inevitable triteness of perpetual repetition.⁹ When the office was bestowed upon him, however, he accepted it, and expressed the required conventional flattery as best he could, with much emphasis upon the traditional glories of the past.¹⁰ As might be expected, Warton's laureate odes are the least valuable of his poems; they are the most commonplace and show least of his peculiar poetic gift.

The laureate odes,¹¹ a short inscription,¹² one humorous poem,¹³ and

⁵According to Mant we owe the portrait of Warton painted by Reynolds and now in the Common Room at Trinity College, to his strong friendship for the artist. *Op. cit.* p. lxxxii.

⁶See letter to Warton, May 13, 1782, B. M. Add. MSS. no. 36526, f. 14, printed in Mant's *Memoirs*, p. lxxxi.

⁷Nichols: *Lit. Illus.* VII, p. 468.

⁸Gray had declined the appointment on the death of Cibber, in 1757, and wrote contemptuously to Mason of the office, adding, 'Nevertheless I interest myself a little in the history of it, and rather wish somebody may accept it that will retrieve the credit of the thing, if it be retrievable, or ever had any credit.' Gray's *Works*. ed. cit. II, p. 345.

⁹*Hist. Eng. Poetry*, II, p. 133.

¹⁰For Southey's praise of Warton's success in giving the laureate odes 'an historical character' see *The Life and Literary Correspondence of Robert Southey*, 6 vols. London, 1850. V, p. 63.

¹¹The *Odes for the New Year, 1786, 1787, 1788* and the *Odes on his Majesty's*

a considerable number of Latin poems were added to the fourth edition, published in 1789,¹⁴ and Warton's humorous pieces were here included for the first time in a collection of his poems. The poems that had been published separately were also added, so that the edition was for the first time practically complete. A reprint of this edition appeared after Warton's death, in 1791.¹⁵

The poems that belong to Warton's later period, that is, those that appeared for the first time in the collected edition of 1777 and were presumably written after the publication of the *Oxford Sausage*, the laureate odes, and other occasional later poetry, show, as would be expected, a considerable advance over his earlier work in the direction

Birthday for the same years. The *Ode* on the birthday of 1785 was omitted from the 1789 and 1791 editions, but included in Mant's, 1802.

¹²The *Inscription over a calm and clear spring in Blenheim gardens*, which was ascribed to Dr. Phanuel Bacon in *Gent. Mag.*, 1792 although the fact that Warton included it in this edition shows it to be his.

¹³The *Prologue on the old Winchester Playhouse, over the Butcher's Shambles* seems not to have been published before.

¹⁴*Poems by Thomas Warton, Fellow of Trinity College, Oxford. The fourth edition, corrected and enlarged.* ΘΕΟΚΡΙΤΟΣ ΤΑ ΡΟΔΑ ΔΡΟΣΟΕΝΤΑ ΚΑΙ Η ΚΑΤΑΨΤΚΝΟΣ ΕΚΕΙΝΗ ΕΠΙΤΑΛΟΣ ΚΕΙΤΑΙ ΤΑΙΣ ΕΛΙΚΟΝΙΑΣΙ ΤΑΙ ΔΕ ΜΕΛΑΜ-ΦΤΑΛΟΙ ΔΑΦΝΑΙ ΤΙΝ ΠΤΘΙΕ ΠΑΙΑΝ. London . . 1789. xi, 292 pp. This edition is very rare; there is no copy in either the British Museum or Bodleian Library, and the one in the Yale University Library lacks pp. (iii)-iv.

¹⁵*The Poems on various Subjects of Thomas Warton, B.D. Late Fellow of Trinity College, Professor of Poetry, and Camden Professor of History, at Oxford, and Poet Laureate. Now first collected.* London, 1791. 292 pp. It contains the following *Advertisement*. 'A reader of taste will easily perceive, that the ingenious Author of the following Poems was of the School of Spenser and Milton, rather than of Pope.

'In Order to make this Collection of his poetical Works the more complete, to the Poems of a more serious cast, are now first added, several pieces of pleasantry and humour; and also some Latin Poems, written with a true classical Purity, Elegance and Simplicity.'

The standard edition is that published by Mant in two volumes in 1802, *The Poetical Works of the late Thomas Warton, B.D. Fellow of Trinity College, Oxford; and Poet Laureate. Fifth edition, corrected and enlarged. To which are now added Inscriptionum Romanarum Delectus, and an Inaugural Speech as Camden Professor of History, never before published. Together with Memoirs of his Life and Writings; and Notes Critical and Explanatory.* Oxford, 1802. This edition contains six English poems not previously published, and reprints the *Ode from Horace, Book III, Ode 13*, which had been published with Joseph Warton's *Odes* in 1746. The new poems were the ode to *Solitude, at an Inn*, (written in 1769), the *Epitaph on Mr. Head*, the *Ode from Horace, Book III, Ode 18*, and three laureate odes.

of the new movement. They are far less imitative; not only are Pope and Swift largely ignored, but even Milton and the early romanticists, Thomson, Parnell, Young, exert less influence. They begin to show, too, some influence of contemporary romanticists, especially of Gray. They are also more markedly characterized by those peculiar qualities which had appeared in Warton's early work, the love of the past and the love of nature.

Four poems in the volume are significant of Warton's poetical taste; three show that his allegiance to the older English poets was unchanged, and one helps to account for Gray's influence. The *Ode sent to Mr. Upton, on his Edition of the Faerie Queene* expresses his early fondness for 'romantic Spenser's moral page' and his joy in reviving his ancient pageantry, and the sonnet *On King Arthur's Round Table, at Winchester* rejoices that

Spenser's page, that chants in verse sublime
Those Chiefs, shall live, unconscious of decay.

In the *Monody, written near Stratford upon Avon* the thought of the 'bard divine' who made here his 'infant offering' of 'daisies pied' transforms, 'as at the waving of some magic wand', a vision of natural loveliness to a fanciful vision of tragedy. The sonnet *To Mr. Gray*¹⁸ expresses the poet's gratitude

For many a care beguil'd
By the sweet magic of thy soothing lay,
For many a raptur'd thought, and vision wild.

The influence of Gray is strong in one of the most interesting and significant of Warton's later poems, the *Ode Written at Vale-Royal Abbey in Cheshire*. It is apparent throughout the poem, from the form, the elegiac quatrain, to the atmosphere of pensive melancholy which pervades it. The poem begins

As evening slowly spreads his mantle hoar,
No ruder sounds the bounded valley fill,
Than the faint din, from yonder sedgy shore,
Of rushing waters, and the murmuring mill,

and continues with a scene not unlike that with which the elegy opens. But there is an important difference between Gray's poem and Warton's. The former is classical and universal in its application and appeal; the scene might be any village church-yard; the conventional moralizing is exactly the sort which dignified the eighteenth century,

¹⁸In the *Observations on the Faerie Queene* Warton had described Gray as a 'real poet,' 'one who has shewn us that all true genius did not expire with Spenser.' II, p. 113.

and which makes an almost constant appeal both because of its truth and because of the perfect form which Gray gave to it. Warton, however, was describing a particular ruined abbey, and it called up in his mind visions of the past in which he was deeply interested. He delighted to reconstruct the ruined abbey, to recall its departed glories, to dwell on the themes dear to him, its architecture, its learning, its minstrelsy, and its romance.

Here ancient Art her dædal fancies play'd
In the quaint mazes of the crisped roof;
In mellow glooms the speaking pane array'd,
And rang'd the cluster'd column, massy proof.

Here Learning, guarded from a barbarous age,
Hover'd awhile, nor dar'd attempt the day;
But patient trac'd upon the pictured page
The holy legend, or heroic lay.

Hither the solitary minstrel came
An honour'd guest, while the grim evening sky
Hung lowering, and around the social flame
Tun'd his bold harp to tales of chivalry.

Both poets portray the transitoriness of human life; Gray advances from the description of an evening scene to contemplation of the dignity and worth of rustic life; Warton to the celebration of vanished glories prized even in an ampler age.

This love of the past, this revival of mediæval glories especially, which occasionally showed in the earlier poems and appeared more strongly in many of his later ones, connects Warton most closely with the romantic movement and constitutes his most original contribution to it. His mediæval poems have also a close relation to his other literary work; they give expression to the same master passion that urged him, as critic and historian, to exploit the beauties of Spenser and the forgotten poets of early English literature. In two of Warton's best and most characteristic odes, he concerned himself wholly with the past. These very romantic poems are *The Crusade* and the *Grave of King Arthur*. The first purports to be the song that Richard Cœur de Leon and Blondel de Nesle composed together, by which the minstrel was able to discover his master in prison. The poem has a fine swing, from the beginning of the song

"Syrian virgins, wail and weep,
English Richard ploughs the deep!"

to the defiant close,—

"We bid those spectre-shapes avaunt,
Ashtaroth, and Termagaunt!

With many a demon, pale of hue,
 Doom'd to drink the bitter dew
 That drops from Macon's sooty tree,
 Mid the dread grove of ebony.
 Nor magic charms, nor fiends of hell,
 The christian's holy courage quell.
 Salem, in ancient majesty
 Arise, and lift thee to the sky!
 Soon on thy battlements divine
 Shall wave the badge of Constantine.
 Ye Barons, to the sun unfold
 Our Cross with crimson wove and gold!"

The favourite ode, however, will always be *The Grave of King Arthur*, in which a story of the national British hero of romance is skilfully set into a brilliant framework of mediæval splendour. Warton explained in a short preface that the story was adapted from the Chronicle of Glastonbury and dealt with a Welsh tradition that Arthur was not carried away to Avalon after the battle of Camlan but was received by monks and buried before the high altar in Glastonbury Abbey. This story, told to Henry II by Welsh bards at Cilgarran Castle, induced him to go to the abbey, find the grave, and, as the ode has it, establish a chantry at its shrine. The description of the feast with which the poem opens is gorgeously romantic, and splendidly suggests the great mediævalist of the next century, Sir Walter Scott. Warton's richness and harmony of diction, his stirring and vigorous appeal to the imagination were continued, but scarcely eclipsed, in the poems of his great successor.

Stately the feast, and high the cheer:
 Girt with many an armed peer,
 And canopied with golden pall,
 Amid CILGARRAN's castle hall,
 Sublime in formidable state,
 And warlike splendour, Henry sate;
 Prepar'd to stain the briny flood
 Of Shannon's lakes with rebel blood.
 Illumining the vaulted roof,
 A thousand torches flam'd aloof:
 From massy cups, with golden gleam
 Sparkled the red metheglin's stream:
 To grace the gorgeous festival,
 Along the lofty-window'd hall,
 The storied tapestry was hung:
 With minstrelsy the rafters rung
 Of harps, that with reflected light

From the proud gallery glitter'd bright:
 While gifted bards, a rival throng,
 (From distant Mona, nurse of song,
 From Teivi, fring'd with umbrage brown,
 From Elvy's vale, and Cader's crown,
 From many a shaggy precipice
 That shade Ierne's hoarse abyss,
 And many a sunless solitude
 Of Radnor's inmost mountains rude,)
 To crown the banquet's solemn close,
 Themes of British glory chose.

Equally romantic, and with the mystic charm of an earlier age is the minstrel's song of the death of Arthur,

"O'er Cornwall's cliffs the tempest roar'd,
 High the screaming sea-mew soar'd;
 On Tintagel's topmost tower
 Darksome fell the sleety shower;
 Round the rough castle shrilly sung
 The whirling blast, and wildly flung
 On each tall rampart's thundering side
 The surges of the tumbling tide:
 When Arthur rang'd his red-cross ranks
 On conscious Camlan's crimson'd banks:
 By Mordred's faithless guile decreed
 Benath a Saxon spear to bleed!
 Yet in vain a paynim foe
 Arm'd with fate the mighty blow;
 For when he fell, an elfin queen,
 All in secret, and unseen,
 O'er the fainting hero threw
 Her mantle of ambrosial blue;
 And bade her spirits bear him far,
 In Merlin's agate-axled car,
 To her green isle's enamell'd steep,
 Far in the navel of the deep.

Warton's love of the past was the inspiration also of three of his sonnets. Two were suggested by relics of the early history of England: one by King Arthur's Round Table, hanging in the old Norman castle at Winchester, and the other by the mysterious monument of 'wondrous origine' unknown at Stonehenge on Salisbury Plain.

The third of the mediæval group, the most interesting of Warton's sonnets, if not the most interesting of all his poems because it affords a characteristic glimpse of the poet-scholar, is the one *Written in a Blank Leaf of Dugdale's Monasticon*. It has for its subject the delightful, the

æsthetic, side of antiquarian study. That aspect made to Warton an appeal quite as strong as the scholarly one; it was to him an influence as potent in poetry and art as the other was in history and scholarship. The antiquary has never had a better defense and justification than the following lines:—

Deem not, devoid of elegance, the Sage,
By Fancy's genuine feelings unbeguil'd,
Of painful pedantry the poring child;
Who turns, of these proud domes, th' historic page,
Now sunk by Time, and Henry's fiercer rage.
Think'st thou the warbling Muses never smil'd
On his lone hours? Ingenuous views engage
His thoughts, on themes, unclassic falsely stil'd,
Intent. While cloister'd Piety displays
Her mouldering roll, the piercing eye explores
New manners, and the pomp of elder days,
Whence culls the pensive bard his pictur'd stores.
Nor rough, nor barren, are the winding ways
Of hoar Antiquity, but strown with flowers.

The same note of interest in the past is struck rather frequently, but never so forcibly, in his last poems, the laureate odes. Aside from this element, the odes have very little merit indeed. They are dignified, conventional, and often perfunctory. Warton was not interested in contemporary events, and George III made no great imaginative appeal; therefore Warton, like many another laureate, took refuge in singing the glories of English heroes of the past, of Alfred and the British legacy of liberty; of William Conqueror and the barons who obtained Magna Charta; of Edward and the victories in France; and in lauding his great predecessors, the laureates of England.

These celebrations of ancient days, together with Warton's neglect of the ostensible subjects of his odes, were cleverly ridiculed by 'Peter Pindar',¹⁷ a poet whose coarse but frequently humorous satires were more successful than his serious verse. In *Ode upon Ode* he parodied Warton's celebration of the past; in *An Expostulatory Epistle from*

¹⁷The pseudonym of John Wolcott. 'Peter Pindar' was not, however, the only satirist of the laureate odes. Edward Forster, a merchant with considerable interest in literature, sent the following parody, or 'abridgment', of the New Year's Ode for 1788 to Gough,

Old Windsor still stands on a hill,
And smiles amid her martial airs,
May Englishmen still cock their hats,
And Frenchmen humbly pull off theirs.

Nichols: *Lit. Illus.* V, p. 289.

Brother Peter to Brother Tom, derided his neglect of the present, and in his *Advice to the Future Laureat*, written after the death of Warton, he pointed with some cleverness to his learning as the cause of his ill success as a laureate.

TOM prov'd unequal to the Laureat's place;
 Luckless, he warbled with an Attic Grace:
 The language was not understood at Court,
 Where bow and curt'sy, grin and shrug, resort;
 Sorrow for sickness, joy for health, so civil;
 And love, that wish'd each other to the devil!

TOM was a scholar—luckless wight!
 Lodg'd with old manners in a musty college;
 He knew not that a Palace hated knowledge,
 And deem'd it pedantry to spell and write.
 TOM heard of royal libraries, indeed,
 And, weakly, fancied that the books were *read*.¹⁸

The second important characteristic of Warton's poetry, the interest in natural scenes as the subject of poetry, which had been in his early period largely coloured by the influence of Milton and Spenser, was equally conspicuous in his later work. In the later poems, however, although he justified his selection of such subjects from the practice of these favourite poets, it is pretty evident that he was painting directly from nature. The following short passage from the ode on *The First of April* illustrates the closeness of Warton's observation of simple details which the pseudo-classicist would have thought beneath the notice of a poet,—

Scant along the ridgy land
 The beans their new-born ranks expand:
 The fresh-turn'd soil with tender blades
 Thinly the sprouting barley shades:
 Fringing the forest's devious edge,
 Half rob'd appears the hawthorn hedge;
 Or to the distant eye displays
 Weakly green its budding sprays.

The modernity of Warton's poetry in which the rustic delights of simple life are celebrated was attested by the fact that his *Hamlet, an Ode written in Whichwood Forest*, was republished in 1859 with fourteen etchings by Birket Foster, a popular engraver, who made illustrations for editions of Milton, Goldsmith, Scott and Wordsworth, and that a second edition was called for in 1876. Yet for all its 'softness' and 'sweetness', the poem is not one of Warton's best efforts.

¹⁸Wolcott's *Works*, I, p. 382; II, pp. 61, and 451 ff.

In two sonnets Warton shows an ability to use the sonnet for that combination of observation of nature and personal reflection¹⁹ which prevailed in the poetry of the next century; they are as reactionary in the direction of the return to nature as the mediæval sonnets were in that of the return to the past. One of these is a study of nature and mood, in the furtherance of which the poet assumed the contrast between the hopeful and the disappointed lover. It is apparent that at least the changeful Surrey landscape was real, whatever the state of feelings in which it was viewed.

While summer-suns o'er the gay prospect play'd,
Through Surry's verdant scenes, where Epsom spreads
Mid intermingling elms her flowery meads,
And Hascombe's hill, in towering groves array'd,
Rear'd its romantic steep, with mind serene,
I journey'd blithe. Full pensive I return'd;
For now my breast with hopeless passion burn'd,
Wet with hoar mists appear'd the gaudy scene,
Which late in careless indolence I pass'd;
And Autumn all around those hues had cast
Where past delight my recent grief might trace.
Sad change, that Nature a congenial gloom
Should wear, when most, my cheerless mood to chase,
I wish'd her green attire, and wonted bloom!

The second nature sonnet, *To the River Lodon*, is even more interesting intrinsically as well as historically. Although one is seldom justified in interpreting poetry biographically, and though Warton was extremely reticent, I cannot but find in this sonnet something of that personal note which was characteristic of the new poetry. It is in the mood of melancholy reflection upon a natural scene that was so congenial a vein to Warton's pupil, William Lisle Bowles.

Ah! what a weary race my feet have run,
Since first I trod thy banks with alders crown'd,
And thought my way was all thro' fairy ground,

¹⁹Professor Saintsbury has overlooked Warton in considering Bowles as 'the first, for more than a century, to perceive its (the sonnet's) double fitness for introspection and for outlook; to combine description with sentiment in the new poetical way,' where he is accurately describing Warton's power. Prof. Saintsbury's omission of Warton among the *Lesser Poets of the Later Eighteenth Century* in the latest volume of the *Cambridge History of English Literature* (vol. XI, 1914) is one of the most conspicuous omissions in that history; and it is the more singular and deplorable since he has included such less important poets as Anstey, Bellamy, Boyse, Cambridge, Croxall, Fawkes, Mendez, Thompson and Woty.

Beneath thy azure sky, and golden sun:
 Where first my Muse to lisp her notes begun!
 While pensive Memory traces back the round,
 Which fills the varied interval between;
 Much pleasure, more of sorrow, marks the scene.
 Sweet native stream! those skies and suns so pure
 No more return, to cheer my evening road!
 Yet still one joy remains, that not obscure,
 Nor useless, all my vacant days have flow'd,
 From youth's gay dawn to manhood's prime mature;
 Nor with the Muse's laurel unbestow'd.

Closely akin to these nature poems are those that celebrate the joys of rustic life, poems that, still echoing Milton, stand between *The Deserted Village* and *The Task*. Of these the *Inscription in a Hermitage* is the most Miltonic in its praise of studious solitude, but the poet's joy in the blackbird's 'artless trill', the wren's 'mossy nest', his concern to count 'every opening primrose', to guide 'fantastic ivy's gadding spray' show the close observer and real lover of nature. In the *Ode to Solitude, at an Inn*,²⁰ the genial poet shows a keen enjoyment of a solitude shared with nature,—

Then was loneliness to me
 Best and true society,—

but an equal impatience with the unrelieved solitude of an inn,—

Here all inelegant and rude
 Thy presence is, sweet Solitude.

The *Sonnet Written after seeing Wilton-House* perhaps belongs in this group; it affords an imaginative variation of Johnson's and Goldsmith's theme that

Our own felicity we make or find.²¹

Warton celebrates the 'pleasure of imagination,' the power of Fancy' to

Bid the green landskip's vernal beauty bloom
 And in bright trophies clothe the twilight wall,

a sentiment as characteristic of the author as it is remote from the moralizing of those sturdy classicists.

Reflection and sentiment have got the better of nature in two odes that, although popular with Warton's contemporaries, fail to move the

²⁰Written May 15, 1769, between Thetford and Ely, see Warton's manuscript copy-books belonging to Miss Catherine Lee.

²¹From the lines added by Johnson to Goldsmith's *Traveller*.

modern reader. The ode *To Sleep* is reminiscent of Young; it invokes sleep to assuage grief, to 'calm this tempest of my boiling blood.' *The Suicide*, the favourite ode of many contemporary readers,²² has fallen into obscurity in spite of, or perhaps because of, its representation of austere virtue triumphing over weak sentimentality. The most interesting feature of the poem now, at least, is the vivid portrayal of nature in a forbidding mood as the background for the sombre theme.

Beneath the beech, whose branches bare,
Smit with the lightning's livid glare,
O'erhang the craggy road,
And whistle hollow as they wave;
Within a solitary grave,
A Slayer of himself holds his accurs'd abode.

Lower'd the grim morn, in murky dies
Damp mists involv'd the scowling skies,
And dimm'd the struggling day;
As by the brook, that ling'ring laves
Yon rush-grown moor with sable waves,
Full of the dark resolve he took his sullen way.

Classical characteristics are not so obvious in Warton's poetry as love of the past and of nature. Although it is difficult to point out particular instances of classical influence in his poetry, the careful reader gains from the whole a definite impression that the writer was thoroughly familiar with the best classical poetry and alive to its characteristic beauties. Mant, the editor of Warton's poems, painstakingly pointed out a number of parallels to passages from such classical poets as Theocritus and Pindar, Virgil, Horace, Ovid and Lucretius. Some few of the poems were, indeed, frank imitations from Horace and Theocritus. But Warton's classicism is not so clearly manifested in imitations from classical poetry or allusions to it as in his recognition of the fact that there is no inevitable antipathy between the classical spirit and 'Gothic' poetry; that they have in common that imaginative quality which is a distinguishing characteristic of the mediæval romances and which the poets of a pseudo-classical age lost by too close an adherence to the form instead of an independent recognition of the spirit of classical poetry. Much of Warton's own poetry, therefore, dealt with mediæval subjects with the deliberate purpose of restoring by that means this essential quality of great poetry which had disappeared in an age of reason.

²²See Mant, *Op. cit.* p. clii; *Recollections of the Table-Talk of Samuel Rogers*, New York, 1856, p. 134; Drake's *Essays*, V, p. 186; Brydges's *Censura Literaria*, London, 1807, IV, p. 274; *Critical Review*, XLIV, p. 111.

Because he recognized the close relation between the mediæval and the classical spirit, Warton distinctly resented, in the sonnet on Dugdale's *Monasticon*, the designation of antiquarian studies as 'unclassic'. And in the *Verses on Sir Joshua Reynolds's Painted Window* he pointed out the possibility of a relation between the spirit of the middle ages and that of classical antiquity, as illustrated, in this instance, by their application to ecclesiastical architecture. Reynolds, as a typical representative of the eighteenth century school of art, saw an incompatibility between the 'softer touch', the 'chaste design', the 'just proportion', and the 'faultless forms of elegance and grace' of classical art; and the 'vaulted dome' and 'fretted shrines', the 'hues romantic' that 'ting'd the gorgeous pane',—the 'Gothic art' of ancient magnificence; the acceptance of one meant for him the denial of the other. Not so with Warton, whose feeling was all for their essential unity.

The common suggestion that Warton's profession of conversion to the classical school of art, his profession that he had been

For long, enamour'd of a barbarous age,
A faithless truant to the classic page,

was probably not quite whole-hearted and did not even deceive the friend to whom it was addressed, does not reveal the full significance of the poem. Its importance in this connection is neither its generous recognition of the beauties of Attic art, nor even the more extended and sympathetic description of the magic of Gothic art, but the suggestion of the possibility of combining classical and mediæval ideals to the advantage of both. With a just sense of their characteristic beauties, the greater naturalness and universality of one, the stronger appeal to the imagination of the other, Warton realized that in art, as in poetry, perfection lay in their union, and therefore he proposed that the great classical artist should

. . . add new lustre to religious light:
Not of its pomp to strip this ancient shrine,
But bid that pomp with purer radiance shine:
With arts unknown before, to reconcile
The willing Graces to the Gothic pile.

The immediate and later reception of Warton's poetry indicates that it belongs much more to the new than to the old school. Johnson and Hazlitt may fairly be taken as typical critics of the two schools: the former could see no merit in the performance of his friend; the latter could not praise it too highly. Dr. Johnson was repelled by Warton's enthusiasm for the past; he could appreciate the benefits to be derived from the study of antiquities in illuminating the history and progress

of mankind,²⁰ but he had no sympathy with Warton's enthusiasm for the intrinsic beauties of old literature and art, nor with his attempt to reëmbodiment something of their spirit and charm in modern poetry; he saw in his poetry only strangeness of language and form, or at best, revival of what was not worth reviving. Although he protested that he still loved the fellow dearly for all he laughed at him, he wrecked his friendship with Warton by ridiculing his verse thus,—

Wheresoe'er I turn my view,
All is strange, yet nothing new;
Endless labour all along,
Endless labour to be wrong;
Phrase that time has flung away;
Unçouth words in disarray,
Trick'd in antique ruff and bonnet,
Ode, and elegy, and sonnet.²¹

Hazlitt, on the other hand, although disposed to blame Warton for the defects of his age in scholarly method, repeatedly acclaimed him a 'man of taste and genius',²² 'a poet and a scholar, studious with ease, learned without affectation',²³ and 'the author of some of the finest sonnets in the language',²⁴—praise which accords well with Warton's vogue among the poets who were Hazlitt's contemporaries.

Interesting as Warton's poetry is in showing his own development from nearly pseudo-classical to pretty romantic ideals, and valuable as much of it is intrinsically, its greatest importance is to the student of literary history as a factor in the development of the new movement. The influence of the romantic poetry of this laureate poet can scarcely be, and certainly has not been, overestimated, though it has not been altogether overlooked. 'If any man may be called the father of the present race', wrote Southey in the *Quarterly* in 1824, 'it is Thomas Warton, a scholar by profession, an antiquary and a poet by choice'.²⁵ Southey mentioned Bampfylde and Russell as belonging to the school of

²⁰See *Ramblers* 83 and 154, Johnson's *Works*, ed. cit. I, p. 386 and II, p. 155, and *Idler* 85, *ibid.* II, p. 633.

²¹Boswell's *Johnson*, III, p. 158.

²²*Critical List of Authors*, from *Select British Poets*, London 1824, p. xii.

²³*Lectures on the English Poets*, Lecture VI, Hazlitt's *Works*, ed. Waller and Glover, London 1904, V, p. 120.

²⁴*Ibid.* See also his essay on *Coleridge's Literary Life* from *Edinburgh Review*, XXVIII, *Works*, ed. cit. X, p. 138 where he says he prefers them 'to Wordsworth's, and indeed to any Sonnets in the language'; *On Milton's Sonnets*, *Table Talk*, Essay XVIII, *Works*, VI, 175, and *Critical List of Authors* as above.

²⁵XXXI, p. 289.

Warton,²⁶ the 'true English school';²⁵ to them he should have added also Headley and Bowles. This little group of young poets who, if they were not drawn into poetry by the 'magnetism of Tom Warton'²⁷ were at least strongly influenced by him to write nature poetry of the new type, and to become also sonneteers. They form the slender thread that connects him with the major romantic poets, especially with Coleridge and Wordsworth.

There is no evidence of direct connection between Bampfylde and Warton. Bampfylde was a Cambridge man who published his first volume of verse, *Sixteen Sonnets*, the year after Warton's first collection of poems appeared.²⁸ However, his somewhat Miltonic diction, his power of realistic description, and his sincerity of feeling²⁹ suggest Warton's verse and justify assigning him to that school. The other three poets were personally attached to Warton; Russell and Bowles were students at Winchester, where they were under the influence of both the Wartons and whence Russell proceeded to New College in 1782, while Bowles and Headley chose Warton's college. All of them published sonnets and other verse of the new sort during Warton's lifetime, and Russell's posthumous volume³⁰ was dedicated to Warton. Of the group Headley was perhaps most obviously influenced by Warton, but Bowles's debt, if possibly slighter, is at the same time historically most important because he, more directly at least than they, influenced later poets. Headley has not only his master's appreciation of nature and his love of describing it and reflecting upon it, but also his interest in the past, in Gothic ruins,

²⁶Two minor poets of Warton's group were John Bennet, a young journeyman shoemaker, son of the parish clerk at Woodstock, who, with Warton's encouragement attained such proficiency that his volume of *Poems on Several Occasions*, 1774, was favourably noticed in the *Critical Review* (XXXVII, p. 473); and William Benwell, a friend and contemporary of Headley's at Trinity, where he, too, was encouraged by Warton. His *Poems, Odes, Prologues, and Epilogues* etc. was published eight years after his death, in 1804.

²⁷Herbert Croft complained to Nichols, May 15, 1786, (*Lit Illus.* V, p. 210) that 'The magnetism of Tom Warton draws many a youth into rhymes and loose stockings, who had better be thinking of prose and propriety; and so it is with his brother Joe. At school I remember we thought we must necessarily be fine fellows if we were but as absent and as dirty as the Adelphi of poetry.'

²⁸S. E. Brydges: *Autobiography, Times, Opinions and Contemporaries*. 2 vols. London 1834, II, p. 257; *Dict Nat. Biog.* art. Bampfylde; and Southey's *Specimens of the Later English Poets*. 3 vols. London 1807, III, p. 434, where are also some of his poems. Three of his sonnets are included in Main's *A Treasury of English Sonnets*, Manchester, 1880, p. 393 ff.

²⁹There is more pathos in Bampfylde's poems than in Warton's.

³⁰*Sonnets and Miscellaneous Poems*, Oxford, 1789.

and in ancient poetry.³¹ Bowles's pensive love of nature and his tender and often melancholy sentiment are the qualities in which he most resembles his master and which were most admired by his contemporaries. The most striking example of Warton's influence upon the later romantic poets is through Bowles's *Sonnet to the River Itchin*, which obviously imitates Warton's *To the River Lodon*, and as obviously suggested Coleridge's *To the River Otter*, while Wordsworth's sequence on the River Duddon comes at once to mind as kindred in feeling. In general, of course, the admiration of these two poets for their less gifted friend and his influence upon them are well recognized facts of literary history.³²

Warton's influence upon the later poets was not confined however to poems of nature and reflection; his chief contribution to the romantic movement was the revival of the spirit of the past, a spirit which found its fullest poetical expression in the poetry of Walter Scott. Even Bowles and Wordsworth, who are most nearly in the other line of romantic development that passed through Warton, had also an interest in mediæval subjects that must be attributed, at least indirectly, to his influence.³³ Scott's poetry, of course, represents the flowering of the Gothic and mediæval qualities which were present in a less perfect form in one group of Warton's poems. The similarity of temper and interests in the two men, and Scott's familiarity with Warton's work show the

³¹The title, at least, of Headley's *Sonnet . . . Written in a blank leaf of Sir William Davenant's Gondibert* is obviously suggested by Warton's similar sonnet in *Dugdale's Monasticon*. His *Verses Written on a Winter's Night*, which begins,—

Who heeds it when the lightning's forked gleam
The rifted towers of old Cilgarran strikes,

the lines *Written amidst ruins of Broomholm Priory, in Norfolk*, and the *Ode to Chatterton*, all have mediæval touches that inevitably suggest Warton. The origin of *Imitations of Old Welsh Poetry* in Ossianic prose is evident. . . The closing lines of *On a fragment of some verses written by a Lady in praise of solitude*, beautifully develop the theme of Warton's seventh sonnet, (quoted above p. 136) and a slight verbal resemblance further indicates this source. In Headley's principal work, the *Select Beauties of Ancient English Poetry*, (1st ed. 1787) the influence of his master's interest in early literature is apparent enough.

³²See Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, ed. Shawcross, Oxford 1907, 2 vols. I, p. 7 ff.; J. D. Campbell: *Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, London, 1896, p. 17 ff.

³³Among Bowles's poems of mediæval interest are his sonnets on *Woodspring Abbey*, 1836, and on *Lacock Nunnery*, *The Last Song of Camoens*, *The Harp of Hoel* and *The Grave of the Last Saxon*. Wordsworth's mediæval poems include sonnets on *Canute* and *Alfred*, the *Monastery of Old Bangor*, *Crusades*, *Richard I*, *Danish Conquests*, *At Furness Abbey*, *Iona*, and the *Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle*, *The Horn of Egremont Castle*, and one that inevitably recalls Warton, lines *Written in a Blank Leaf of Macpherson's Ossian*.

influence of Warton upon the younger poet as certainly as such things can be shown. Quotations from Warton appear in the chapter headings of his works and upon the title-page of his *Scottish Minstrelsy*,—

The songs, to savage virtue dear,
That won of yore the public ear!
Ere Polity, sedate and sage,
Had quench'd the fires of feudal rage.

Therefore, while it would doubtless be too much to claim for Warton the whole credit for inspiring in Scott the enthusiasm for the past which characterizes his stirring mediæval poems; for beginning and passing on to Wordsworth by way of Bowles the meditative description of simple natural objects; or for beginning the sonnet revival,³⁴ it is only just to say that he both represented and furthered to an important extent these tendencies incipient in eighteenth century poetry and dominant in the poetry of the next century, in the romantic triumph.

³⁴T. H. Ward does make exactly this claim for Warton in his introduction to his poetry in *English Poets*, III, p. 383.

CHAPTER X.

THE ANTIQUARY.

Interest in the past may well be called Warton's master passion; by turns it dominated, inspired, enriched his literary work. It prompted him to attempt a history of English poetry; it was at least partly the source of the historical method of literary criticism which he introduced into the *Observations on the Faerie Queene* and the *History*; and it gave to his poetry a new theme and a new interest. It produced also some work of a strictly antiquarian character and filled the notes of his history of poetry with comments on all sorts of antiquities—numismatics, topography, diplomatics, and above all, architecture. Upon these distinctly antiquarian subjects, as well as on literature, he was an authority of no mean importance, one apt to be consulted in important disputes among antiquarians.¹ One of his earliest publications was strictly antiquarian in character, *A Description of the City, College & Cathedral of Winchester. The whole illustrated with . . . particulars, collected from a manuscript of A. Wood, etc.* The title is a sufficient description of its character. The work was published without date in 1750. It was reprinted in 1857 when Sir Thomas Phillips printed privately at Middle

¹See correspondence with Gough anent the so-called Winchester coin. *Lit. Anec.* VI, p. 177 ff. notes.

An unpublished letter to Philip Morant, the author of *The History and the Antiquities of the County of Essex* (1760-80) shows that he was always glad to put the result of his incidental studies at the service of his avowedly antiquarian friends.

Rev. Sir,

If the Particulars in the enclosed Paper, relating to *Navestock in Ongar Hundred*, Co. Essex, have not come to your knowledge, I flatter myself you will excuse this trouble. They are intended for the next Part of your *Antiquities of Essex*. You may be satisfied that the Account is authentic; but if you should be pleased to make use of it, I will beg you not to mention my Name, but only to note at the bottom of the Page, that the Information was received from Trinity College Oxford. I heartily wish you Success in your very useful Researches, & am, Sir,

Your most obedient Servant,

Tho. Warton,

Fellow of Trin. Coll. Oxon.

Oxon. Jun. 8, 1763.

British Museum Additional MSS. 37222, f. 174.

Hill from Warton's 'own printed copy' in his possession. *Thomas Warton's Notes and Corrections to his History of Winchester College, and Cathedral printed in 1750.*

For all of Warton's antiquarian enthusiasm and reputation he was never without a sense of humour; he saw the absurdities as well as the value of delving in the past, and was always willing to poke sly fun at a 'mere antiquarian', even at himself in that rôle. Of such a character, but additionally interesting for its humorous ridicule of guide books and of university customs, is a book published without date in 1760 and called *A Companion to the Guide, and a Guide to the Companion: being a Complete Supplement to all the Accounts of Oxford hitherto published. Containing, An accurate Description of several Halls, Libraries, Schools, Public Edifices, Busts, Statues, Antiquities, Hieroglyphics, Seats, Gardens, and other Curiosities, omitted or misrepresented, by Wood, Hearn, Salmon, Prince, Pointer, and other eminent Topographers, Chronologers, Antiquarians, and Historians. The Whole interspersed with Original Anecdotes, and interesting Discoveries, occasionally resulting from the Subject. And embellished with perspective Views and Elevations, neatly engraved.* This ridiculous pamphlet, in which Warton with apparent seriousness tells all sorts of nonsense about his collegiate city, was extremely popular and went through many editions, all unowned by the author.² The mock-serious continuation of the antiquarian dispute over the derivation and meaning of the name Oxford, which Warton affected to settle by emending the reputed Roman name, *Bellositum*, to *Bullositum*, and by citing many similar names in the vicinity as evidence of its correctness, is a good example of his way of burlesquing antiquarian pedantry.

The favourite antiquarian subject of local antiquities and parochial history at one time claimed his attention and led him to write a history of his parish of Kiddington, which he hoped might some day be included in a complete history of Oxfordshire, but which should at least serve to illustrate his idea of how such a history should be written. Twenty copies only of this *Specimen of a Parochial History of Oxfordshire* were printed in the winter of 1781-2 for presents to his antiquarian friends.³ A sec-

²'The Second Edition, Corrected and Enlarged,' London (1762). A fourth edition was published before 1765 (See *Lit. Illus.* VIII, p. 396). It was also edited by Cooke, Oxford, 1806.

³See Mant, *Op. cit.* p. lxxviii. Copies are therefore rare; neither the British Museum nor Bodleian Library has one, but there is one in the library of Winchester College. The book has no title-page, but the name, 'T. Warton', is signed to the postscript, and the date, January 1782, is written in it. On page 11 the note of

ond enlarged and corrected edition⁴ of two hundred and fifty copies was printed the following year at Oxford by Daniel Prince.⁵ A new preface explained the author's theory of the value of minute antiquarian studies as contributions to a general history of manners, arts, and customs. It declared his purpose of supplying a detailed study of the locality he knew best and showed how the history of national antiquities might be drawn from similar descriptions of every county. That is to say, Warton's antiquarian research was directed toward a definite and useful end; it was not an end in itself.

Warton's principal interest of a strictly antiquarian character was, however, in mediæval architecture. Yet his study of this subject, to which he devoted most of his vacations for thirty years, produced no results comparable to those of his studies of mediæval literature. Indeed his only published contribution to the subject is almost his first indication of interest in it. One of the digressions in the second edition of the *Observations on the Faerie Queene* is a brief review of the history of architecture in England with examples of the various periods.⁶

Of all the work that Warton left unfinished at his death, none is so tantalizing as the one he more than once described as *Observations, Critical and Historical, on Churches, Monasteries, Castles and Other Monuments of Antiquity*, and which was repeatedly announced as ready

Warton's presentation to the living at Kiddington, concludes, 'He is now Rector, Jul. 10, 1781'.

The postscript, the substance of which was more fully developed in the preface to later editions, is as follows. 'If ever a History of Oxfordshire should be undertaken, I wish to contribute this account of a parish, with which I am most nearly connected, and consequently best acquainted. Other places might have been selected, more fertile of curious information; but my choice was determined by my situation. As this account now stands detached, some notes, which in an intire history of the county would have been otherwise disposed of, were thought necessary. In its present state, I mean if it never should have the good fortune to be incorporated into a larger work, it may serve as a specimen of the writer's general idea of a parochial history. T. Warton.'

This copy belonged to Cayley Illingworth, Archdeacon of Stowe, whose *Topographical Account of the Parish of Scampton*, etc, London, 1808, may have been modelled upon Warton's suggestions.

⁴*The History and Antiquities of Kiddington: First published as a Specimen of a History of Oxfordshire.* It reached a third edition in 1815.

⁵*Lit. Anec.* III, p. 695, and VI, p. 180.

⁶Warton not very accurately described them as 'Saxon', 'Gothic Saxon', 'Saxon Gothic,' and 'Absolute,' 'Ornamental,' and 'Florid Gothic'. By *Saxon* Warton meant, however, *Norman*, and later substituted that term. See note in Phillips's edition of the *History of Winchester*, which reads, '*pro Saxon lege Norman.*'

for publication,⁷ but which never appeared. John Price, the Bodleian Librarian and Warton's close friend, was authority for the statement that he purposed contributing a paper on the *History of Ecclesiastical Architecture in England* to the Antiquarian Society, of which he had long been a member,⁸ but to which he had not contributed any papers. He also reported to Mant that among Warton's papers which came into his hands at his death and which he communicated to Dr. Warton there was a manuscript written out ready for the press with directions to the printer, which contained a *History of Saxon and Gothic Architecture*.⁹ Such a manuscript—and there is less reason to question Price's statement than to deplore the carelessness with which Warton's papers were evidently handled immediately after his death—has never been found. After Joseph Warton's papers passed into the hands of his son John, they seem to have been well taken care of, and the latter made a thorough, but vain, search for the manuscript. He did find, however, what still remains in the possession of his heirs, some manuscripts which are of value to his biographer because they show that he spent his holidays in untiring devotion to this hobby.

These manuscripts¹⁰ are the property of Miss Catherine H. Lee, the great granddaughter of Joseph Warton. They consist of four copy-books of architectural notes made by Warton on the course of his vacation rambles. There are also eight transcripts or enlarged versions of the first notes, and eight books of copies of these transcripts, copied out faithfully and much more legibly by the laureate's sister, Miss Jane Warton. These copy-books were not the only records of the antiquarian journeys, for one finds in them references, 'see Tom Warton's Journal', or 'N. B. Examine Pockett-Book'. Of these additional records I have been able to find only three journals, in the library of Winchester College. They consist for the most part of very meagre personal detail of the number of miles travelled per day, the inns visited, the state of the weather, the expense of the journey, etc. There are also at Winchester and in the library of Trinity College, Oxford, several more books of architectural notes similar to those in Miss Lee's possession though rather less full and if possible more untidy and illegible. There are no enlarged

⁷See letter to Gough, June 11, 1781, 'Warton's Observations etc. . are ready for the press; but the History of Architecture is not yet finished. How soon he will publish them, I cannot say.' *Lit. Illus.* V, p. 528. It was referred to in the *History of English Poetry* as a work soon to appear, Vol. I, Diss. I, p. (113), note *a* and Vol. III, p. xxii.

⁸Warton was elected in 1771.

⁹Mant, Op. cit. I, p. xxxii.

¹⁰They are mentioned by Sir Sidney Lee in his life of Warton in the *Dic. Nat. Biog.*

versions of them. The very unordered and incomplete condition of both the copy-books and transcripts shows that they are not the 'copy fairly written out for the press' which Price described to Mant, but only a collection of material for it.¹¹

So far as we can judge from the notebooks, the summer tours upon which this material was collected began in 1760, though there is some reason to think that his habit of taking careful notes of architectural antiquities personally observed had been formed earlier.¹² Perhaps it was an inheritance or the result of youthful visits to historic places. The idea of utilizing the descriptions of places visited for the definite purpose of a history of architecture was a later thought. As soon after the close of the Trinity term as it was possible for Warton to get away from Oxford, he would set out alone or with a companion¹³ to make a leisurely peregrination or 'ramble' of perhaps two weeks. In his later years the journeys were often made later in the summer and probably by chaise,¹⁴ and if Dr. Warton and his family did not sometimes accompany him, they at least joined him occasionally, for they are mentioned as his companions in the Winchester Journals of 1775, 1779 and 1788.

Sometimes the route lay southwestward, through Kent, Sussex and Essex, with visits at Lewes, Croydon, Canterbury, etc.¹⁵, and admitting

¹¹The following is the titlepage of the manuscript:

Critical and Historical Observations. On Churches, Castles, etc., in various Counties of England. Taken from an actual Survey. Improved from the Author's collection printed and pub.

(only so much added from books as might illustrate and confirm what I said)

Persons on the spot will find fault with *why* I have added 'certain'.^a

A work of Taste & history of manners.

This work is the result of various journies & the examination of various MS. evidences.

^aOn the second page the title reads 'On certain Churches' etc.

¹²For example, the *History of Winchester* is based largely on personal observation.

¹³That he sometimes traveled alone is shown by his *Ode to Solitude at an Inn*, written May 15, 1769, at a village inn between Thetford and Ely. (See Warton's *Poems*, ed. 1802, I, p. 140, and Lee MSS.) Yet he often uses the pronoun 'we' in his journals, although he seldom names his companion. Under the date of Aug. 19, 1788, he says, 'Ride to Brockley-Comb with Dr. Warton' and under the date of Aug. 8, 1789, his last tour, he writes, 'met J. Price at Wilect (?)' Winchester MSS. See also Trinity MSS. Sept. 18, 1767.

¹⁴For example, Sunday, Aug. 10, 1788, he writes, 'Drove from Beeston through Wroxall'. Winchester MSS.

¹⁵May, 1763 and June, 1764. Lee MSS.

of a brief stay in London;¹⁶ sometimes northward, through Norfolk and Suffolk, to visit Newark and Lincoln, Norwich,¹⁷ Thetford, and Ely;¹⁸ again westward into Wales, where romantic landscapes furnished a fine setting for ruined castles. Frequently the journey began at Winchester, when Joseph Warton very likely accompanied his brother. Sometimes they proceeded by easy stages southward to Christ Church, where Thomas made observations on the fine old 'Saxon' (Norman) building with its Gothic casing, and indignantly lamented the damage it suffered during the grand rebellion when the horses of the Presbyterians were stabled in the Lady Chapel, to the serious injury of the fine ornamental work over the altar.²⁰ Thence they journeyed westward into picturesque Devonshire and to Exeter, where he found the cathedral 'very heavy and far from magnificent';²¹ then northward to Taunton and to Glastonbury,²² where the portcullis and sprig-rose of Henry VII were conspicuous decorative features not only of the abbey but in various parts of the town—ornaments which Warton shrewdly suspected were taken from the abbey itself. From there they might go on to Oxford by way of Cirencester.²³ One of the Winchester journals describes a 'Tour from Winton into Sussex, and round to Oxford' including stops at Tewkesbury Abbey, Worcester Cathedral, Westham Church, and a visit at 'General Oglethorpe's, a most sequestered romantic situation, with some pictures of Sir Peter Lely &c.'²⁴ In 1788, although he had twinges of gout and spent several days of his vacation at Bath, he made a long journey from Sonning to Southampton and one day drove fifteen miles to Cheddar Cliff where he was impressed with the view. He described it as 'a most stupendous aperture on the South side of Mendip a winding chasm of vast breadth with immense cliffs, gigantic scale mass(?) of various shapes & sizes most lofty & often perpendicular with Caverns here and there, bearing away to Rocky(?) Hole, 4 miles off.'²⁵

Warton's journals show that he had a fondness for wild and strik-

¹⁶Warton was at Rochester May 25, 1763, and London lay on his route to both Oxford and Winchester. He was at Dover June 7, and Waltham June 14, 1764; the journey from Dover to Waltham, of which no account is given, could not have occupied a week's time, and the route again lay through London. He was at Hampton Court, just outside London, May 7, 1769. Lee MSS.

¹⁷1765. *Ibid.*

¹⁸1769. *Ibid.*

¹⁹May, 1762. *Ibid.*

²⁰May 5, 1761. *Ibid.*

²¹May 8, 1761. *Ibid.*

²²May 14-15, 1761. *Ibid.*

²³May 19, 1761. *Ibid.*

²⁴June 4, 1775. Winchester MSS.

²⁵Aug. 4 to 28, 1788. *Ibid.*

ing scenes like those just described, and it is interesting to note that he often applies the term 'romantic' to them. For example, in his journal for 1767 occurs this description: 'On the side of a romantic Valley, very steep and rocky, among woods and vallies(?) stands Bury Castle. . The position is most romantic & solitary.'²⁶ Another romantic situation was that of the old dormitory at Brecknock, 'on a Declivity cover'd with oaks falling down to the irregular windings of the River Usk'.²⁷

In the pages of these notebooks we catch many interesting glimpses of Warton and his companion; now they are amid the ruins of Goodrich Castle in Herefordshire,—a castle Warton described as picturesquely situated 'on the edge of a woody and rocky declivity, rising from a romantic and winding valley, water'd by the river Wye,'²⁸ spending the long May afternoon wandering about its scanty ruins, tracing the lines of the old walls, examining the square Norman tower, and the Chapel indicated by the remains of the great east window and the 'perishing outline' of a saint in red at the entrance,²⁹ and in the late evening lingering over an inscription whose antique characters were scarcely legible in the last rays of the sun setting behind the castle.³⁰ Again we see them at Hereford Cathedral, bewailing the disfigurement of the nave, when it was turned into a parish church, 'by a most shabby set of pews for hearing the sermons', and of the arches opening into the choir by a 'very clumsy and tawdrey organ gallery'.³¹ Frequently we find Warton among the ruins of an old church looking over the old sexton's trumpery collection of 'relics,'—'old keys, spurs, bits of pavements, etc. dug up from the Ruins'³²—in hope of making a real 'find'; or in a less dilapidated church leading on the sexton or chorister to tell of the old days when the vaulted arches reëchoed at matins and evensong the tones of the now disused organ and the voices of the choir long since disbanded.³³ On all these journeys Warton's enthusiasm never flagged; with scrupulous care he noted down the various styles of architecture, the general state of preservation or decay, the subjects of storied windows, the fine old brasses and tombs which had escaped the ravages of time and the Presbyterians, and the names of antiquarian works with which his observations were to be compared. The brief journal of his last vacation tour, in the vicinity of Southampton, shows him as eager as ever, and

²⁶Sept. 3, 1767. Trinity Coll. MSS.

²⁷May 18, 1771. Lee MSS.

²⁸May 12, 1771. *Ibid.*

²⁹Now wholly disappeared.

³⁰May 12, 1771. *Ibid.*

³¹May 13, 1771. *Ibid.*

³²St. Alban's, Dec. 30, 1759. *Ibid.*

³³Llandaff, May 30, 1760. *Ibid.*

contains antiquarian notes on the Roman road from Porchester to Chichester.³⁴

Very naturally Warton's purpose soon came to be more than simply investigation. His enthusiastic love for these fine old treasures was roused to indignation when he saw their dilapidation hastened by the vandalism of rural communities who pillaged the ruins of noble abbeys and castles to build their own houses or roads,³⁵ and he did what he could to stop their ravages. According to the late Henry Boyle Lee, the grandmother of the present owner of Warton's notebooks used to tell of 'her uncle's self-congratulations on the subject of his efforts in that direction. He would relate with glee how often he had stopped some pursy vicar riding with his wife stuck behind him on a pillion into Oxford, or Winchester, or about any neighborhood in which he had sojourned, and how he had scolded, and argued, and almost shed tears, rather than fail to enlist their sympathies in favour of some tomb or niche which he had heard of as being doomed to destruction,' or how he had lingered 'over ale and tobacco in out-of-the-way roadside inns' to convert 'from the error of his ways some stupid farmer, who had designs on the recumbent effigy of doughty knight or stately dame, and was about to have it mutilated and maimed for the purpose of making more pewroom for the hoops and petticoats of his buxom daughters'.³⁶ Not the least valuable result of Warton's antiquarian jaunts, therefore, was that he stayed the hands of many such destroyers throughout the country, while he was planning at the same time to arouse in the polite reading-public a renewed interest in the treasures of their glorious past which would ensure their future preservation.

To appreciate the importance and value of Warton's interest in Gothic architecture, one has but to consider the depth of contempt and neglect into which that style of architecture had sunk in the eighteenth century in the wake of the revival of the Renaissance style introduced from Italy by Inigo Jones and popularized by Sir Christopher Wren. The beauties of Westminster Abbey and the Tower were quite overlooked by eighteenth century admirers of St. Paul's, who were not to be easily won back to an appreciation of the beauties of mediæval architecture.

The revival of interest in mediæval architecture has been closely associated by students of the romantic movement with that of mediæval literature,³⁷ and the name which has always occupied the most

³⁴Aug. 8, 1789. Winchester MSS.

³⁵Bury, 1769. Lee MSS.

³⁶Henry Boyle Lee: *Thomas Warton, Cornhill Magazine*, June, 1865, vol. XI, p. 737 ff.

³⁷For example, H. A. Beers: *History of English Romanticism in the Eighteenth Century*, 1910. Chapter VII, *The Gothic Revival*.

prominent place among those who contributed to this revival is that of the dilettante and virtuoso, Horace Walpole. The manuscript notes on architecture of Thomas Warton, however, help to establish his claim to be considered with Walpole in this respect and show that his interest was deeper and his influence equally great.

Warton's study of Gothic architecture is the more important because it was not a pose nor a fad, like Walpole's, but the natural complement of his other mediæval interests. In neither did love of the subject arise from any thorough knowledge of mediæval building. Both were distressingly ignorant (from a modern point of view) of the details of the subject, so that even Warton, who studied the technical side much more thoroughly than Walpole,³⁸ gave only a confused description of the periods and styles of architecture. Warton's interest, however, had much deeper root than Walpole's. Although Walpole was, as Leslie Stephen said, 'almost the first modern Englishman who found out that our old cathedrals were really beautiful',³⁹ mediæval art was after all only a toy for him, and his absurd imitations of old architecture—his parodies of altars and tombs for his chimney pieces and of cathedral pillars for his garden gate posts—resemble the 'whilom' and 'ywis' of the first eighteenth century imitators of Spenser. His service in setting a Gothic fashion in architecture is quite comparable to that of those poets whose half-amused fondness for Spenserian verse gave it a certain popularity even before genuine appreciation and intelligent study had produced a justification of its beauties on firm grounds of critical theory such as Warton's *Observations on the Faerie Queene*. On the other hand Warton's more genuine admiration for the architectural beauties of the past urged him to attempt a similar service for mediæval architecture; his *Observations of the Churches, Castles, etc. of England*, with its pendent *History of Gothic Architecture*, would have been a companion piece to his observations on Spenser in all that enthusiastic love of the subject and careful observation could do. But, unfortunately for the history of Gothic architecture in England, Warton was a scholar, not a builder; poetic insight could not fathom the mysteries of architecture; and Warton's history, had it been published, though valuable in its day, would have had far less revolutionary and permanent value than his critical work in a sister art.

³⁸In those fields where their interests touched, Walpole always recognized Warton's superior scholarship and mastery of the subject. When Warton sent him the second edition of the *Observations on the Faerie Queene* with a complimentary note, Walpole replied with sincerity, 'compare your account of Gothic architecture with mine; I have scarce skimmed the subject; you have ascertained all its periods.' Walpole's *Letters*, Ed. cit. V, p. 237.

³⁹*Hours in a Library*, ed. 1907, vol. II, p. 139.

Warton's interest in mediæval architecture not only was more genuine than Walpole's but probably even preceded it in point of time; he was certainly equally influential in reviving general interest in the subject even though the work that was to set forth its history never appeared. Walpole first showed his interest in 1750 when he declared in his private correspondence his purpose of building a 'little Gothic castle at Strawberry Hill';⁴⁰ by that time Warton had shown in three publications his admiration for Gothic architecture. His *Pleasures of Melancholy*, written in 1745 and published in 1747, contained many references to it; his *Triumph of Isis*, 1749, has a eulogy of the Gothic beauties of Oxford, and his *Description of Winchester*, 1750, is full of admiring descriptions of mediæval architecture. If Walpole's tastes were more talked of among gentlemen of fashion, and his influence is, for that reason, more apparent to the student of the period, Warton's had a wider circulation among a substantial class of growing importance, and his influence therefore deserves greater recognition than it has yet received. His services in arresting the destruction of the crumbling remains of feudal castles and mediæval abbeys under the combined depredations of time and ruthless neighbours, though quite unostentatious, were more persistent and probably far more effective than Walpole's, especially since his landlessness saved him from that temptation to add a few genuine old Gothic pieces to a miscellaneous collection of imitations to which both Walpole and Scott yielded.

Therefore, for his genuine and deep-rooted admiration for Gothic architecture, as shown in his poetry and in his critical work, for his persistent efforts to comprehend its forms and development, for his attempt to write its history illustrated with descriptions of many of its best examples throughout England, and for his quiet but earnest efforts to preserve these examples, Warton's name deserves to stand high on the list of those who contributed to the revival of interest in mediæval architecture as part of the whole mediæval revival. Yet, however valuable was his strictly antiquarian work, his perception of the relative unimportance of such studies, which distinguished him from the 'mere antiquarian', led him to reserve it for his holidays, while he devoted his best energies to works of whose immediate and lasting value there is no question.

⁴⁰*Letters*, ed. cit. II, p. 423.

CHAPTER XI

LAST YEARS. 1780-1790.

One of the most important among the varied interests that distracted Warton from his purpose of completing the *History of English Poetry*¹ was the final expression of his life-long devotion to Milton. The constancy of this interest had been repeatedly shown,—by digressions on Milton's poetry in his first critical work, by the obvious influence of Milton on his own poetry, and by frequent references to him in the history of poetry. The result of this long study was that in 1785 Warton published one of his best works, an edition of Milton's shorter poems.² Like his father,³ the editor was eager to establish the great poet's reputation. On the basis of his own sound scholarship he compelled recognition of Milton's importance in the eighteenth century by describing the rise of a 'school of Milton . . . in emulation of the school of Pope',⁴ and secured a fuller appreciation of his poetry by a modern interpretation of it, especially by applying to its study the new historical method.

Warton had previously recognized the need for the historical study of Milton when he pointed out in the *Observations* that an acquaintance with that very mediæval literature which had been mistakenly overlooked even in the study of Spenser was also important for the study of Milton. He realized that since Milton was at least partly 'an old English poet', he required 'that illustration, without which no old English poet can be well illustrated',⁵ which is to be found in 'Gothic' literature. The great merits, therefore, of Warton's edition of Milton arise from his ripe scholarship and his excellent poetical taste. His acquaintance with many of the poets with whom Milton must have been familiar enabled him correctly to interpret his poet; his taste and

¹Yet the plan was never wholly abandoned. See Mant, *Op. cit.* p. lxxviii; *Lit. Anec.* III, p. 696, and preface to the edition of Milton, 1785.

²*Poems upon Several Occasions, English, Italian, and Latin*, . by John Milton . with notes critical and explanatory, and other illustrations, by Thomas Warton, London 1785. Second edition, 'with many alterations, and large additions', London 1791.

³For whom he claimed the merit of having introduced the shorter poems to Pope. Ed. *Milton*, 1791, Pref. p. x.

⁴*Ibid.* p. xii.

⁵*Ibid.* p. xxiv.

sympathy helped him to point out Milton's chief beauties. The notes to the edition are a rich collection of comment upon the work of other editors, of corrections of textual emendations by comparison with the Milton autograph manuscript⁶ as well as with early editions, of explanations of obscure words and figures by the study of modern and classical parallels, and of critical appreciation of poetical excellences.

Besides contributions to the literary study of Milton, Warton made an important discovery of biographical material when he prepared for inclusion in the second edition a copy of Milton's nuncupative will, together with the evidence taken at the hearing of the case on its being contested.⁷ Another important addition was his account of the origin and history of *Comus*.⁸

The result of a lifetime of study was an edition of Milton that is not only one of Warton's best works, but one that has been described by a modern editor of Milton as 'one of the best books of comment in the English language.'⁹ It is generally recognized as an important source for the study of Milton.¹⁰ And on the whole its merits were pretty well recognized even when it first appeared. In the thirty years that had elapsed since his commentary on Spenser was published, historical criticism had made such progress that some readers could appreciate the work of a critic who was 'not less conversant with Gothic than with classical knowledge.'¹¹ This attitude of appreciative approval was not, however, universal; an anonymous letter to the editor¹² attacked the work not only on this very ground that it quoted too extensively from the 'English Black Letter Classics' and fostered the

⁶At Trinity College, Cambridge. A description of it with variant readings forms an appendix to Warton's second edition, pp. 578-590.

⁷After a long and fruitless search Warton was obliged to confess in the first edition that he was unable to find the will, and he concluded that it was no longer in existence. With the aid of Sir Wm. Scott, however, he was able to add it to the second edition. See Pref. p. xlii.

⁸Reprinted in *Comus, a mask: presented at Ludlow Castle 1634* etc. London, 1799, and in Brydges's ed. of the *Poetical Works of Milton*, 6 vols. 1835, vol. V, p. 173, ff.

⁹David Masson: *The Poetical Works of John Milton*, 3 vols. London, 1874, III, p. 341.

¹⁰Warton's notes were transferred almost bodily to Todd's 'Variorum' edition 1801, to Hawkins's ed., 1824, and they have been drawn upon ever since. See also Brydges's ed. 1835, and the Aldine ed. 1845.

¹¹*Critical Review*, May 1785, LIX, p. 321. See also *Gent. Mag.* 1785, LV¹, pp. 290 ff., 374 ff., 457 ff.; *Monthly Rev.* LXXIX, p. 97 ff. and Hawkins's preface.

¹²A Letter to the Rev. Mr. Thomas Warton on his late edition of *Milton's Juvenile Poems*, London, 1785.

growing 'Relish for all such Reading as was never read,'¹³ but, more justly, for its tendency to over-long and tedious explanations of trifling points and for the unnecessary severity of the criticism of Milton's Puritanism. The latter are undoubtedly the defects of the work; the former is, however, one of its chief merits and the principal source of its sympathetic interpretation of the poet. An exchange of mild hostilities on the subject of the edition of Milton between Warton's critics and his admirers, which appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine* during 1785 and 1786,¹⁴ has no critical value.

The success of the edition of Milton's shorter poems encouraged Warton to continue and complete it with a second volume containing a similar study of *Samson Agonistes* and *Paradise Regained*.¹⁵ He therefore removed from the first volume such notes as related particularly to those poems and prepared others. But this plan, like other of his projects, was never completed. It was, however, carried to such an advanced state of completion that in the summer of 1789 Warton expected it to appear the following April.¹⁶ The second edition of the minor poems, which was to be the first volume of the intended whole,¹⁷ was in the hands of the printer at the time of his death,¹⁸ and was issued without alteration the following year. It is probable that most of the notes for the second volume were lost, as Mant says,¹⁹ in that removal of Warton's papers from Oxford to Winchester which was so disastrous to the notes for the fourth volume of the history of poetry.

¹³*Ibid.* p. 40.

¹⁴LV¹ pp. 416 and 435, LV² p. 513, and LVI¹ pp. 211-214.

¹⁵Mant reported an unsubstantiated rumour to the effect that the king had suggested the enlargement of the plan. *Op. cit.* p. xc.

¹⁶He wrote to Steevens from Southampton July 27, 1789, 'My first volume, with many considerable alterations and accessions, is quite ready for Press; and the Copy of the second is in great forwardness, so that I believe I shall be out by next April.' Bodl. MSS. Eng. Misc. C. 1, fol. 86.

¹⁷The signatures of this volume are numbered *Vol. I* in anticipation of the second volume.

¹⁸Toward the close of the long vacation at Winchester he wrote to Malone, 'I am deep in my Milton, and go to press with that work the 7th. of November' (Winton, Sept. 30th, 1789, Brit. Mus. Addit. MSS. 30375, no. 11), and to Price, 'I return with my new edition of Milton ready for press at the Clarendon.' (Oct. 12, 1789, Mant, *Op. cit.* p. lxxxix. See also Mant, p. xc and the preface to the second edition of *Milton*, p. xxvi). A little later he wrote again to Malone, 'We are at press most rapidly with *Milton*' (B. M. MSS. as above no. 12), and, 'I have lately been so much hurried by . . . Milton's Proofs . . . that I have not been able to find the Transcript as I promised.' (16th Dec. 1789, same, no. 14).

¹⁹*Op. cit.* p. xci.

Joseph Warton long intended to publish in completion of the edition,²⁰ the few notes that remained, but he never did so. After his death, his son, John Warton, sent them to Todd to be used in his second edition of *Milton*.²¹

In the preparation of his edition of *Milton*, Warton, as usual, engaged the help of his friends in the search for wanted books and manuscripts. I cull from his letters evidence of a few such borrowings. From Isaac Reed he begged the favour of 'T. Randolph's *Poems*, printed at Oxford in 1637,²² not 1640, which is the second edition,'²³ which he thought might be the edition containing *Comus*²⁴ described by Sir Henry Wotton.²⁵ Being unable to find such an edition, he came to a conclusion which was borne out by his own experience of old English books, that the combination was made by the binder. He consulted Steevens, to whom he sent notes on Shakespeare, about the *Milton* manuscript at Trinity College, Cambridge,²⁶ and arranged to make transcripts from it when he should visit Cambridge.²⁷ He twice acknowledges 'hints for *Milton*' from Malone, but does not indicate their character.²⁸

The preparation of the two editions of *Milton* and of the enlarged edition of his poetry—and he had not wholly abandoned the history of poetry—was not so engrossing that Warton did not find time to take a lively interest in the literary labours of his friends. During his whole life he had been as eager to help them as he was glad to acknowledge their contributions to his own work. He was at this time particularly

²⁰See letter to Hayley, 1792, *Wooll. Op. cit.* p. 404.

²¹7 vols, London, 1809, vol. I, pref. p. vi.

²²Warton corrected this date to 1638 in his second ed. *Milton*, p. 119.

²³Letter to Isaac Reed, April 13th, 1873. *Montague d. 2*, fol. 51. This letter and those preceding and following, to Malone and Steevens, are printed in full with notes in the *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, XIV, no. 1, pp. 96-118.

²⁴'You were properly right in guessing why I wished to see this Book. I have been (with you) long searching for *Comus* at the end of this volume of Randolph, . . . I think Mr. Bowle (Wilts) told me he saw a *Randolph*, with *Comus* annexed.' Letter to Reed, April 19th, 1783. *Bodl. MSS. Montague d. 2*, fol. 54.

²⁵See Warton's *Milton*, second edition, pp. 118 ff.

²⁶Western MSS. no. 583. See also *Milton*, ed. cit., pp. 578-590.

²⁷The Trinity manuscript will not be wanted until we arrive at the end of the present volume; I think with you, that I must [be] the Transcriber; and I will endeavour to arrange the matter so as to visit Cambridge at Christmas next, and to do the Business.' Letter to Steevens, Southampton, July 27th, 1789. *Bodl. MSS. Eng. Misc. C. 1*, fol. 86.

²⁸'Many thanks for the hints for *Milton*', Purbrook, Aug. 17th, 1787, and, 'I avail myself, with many thanks, for your hints to my *Milton*.' Oxon. Dec. 6, 1789, *Brit. Mus. MSS. Addit.* 30375, nos. 8 and 13.

interested in Malone's plan for an edition of Shakespeare, and was able to be of considerable help in its preparation, contributing to it from his collections for the later and unfinished portion of his history of poetry. For this purpose he called Malone's attention to 'a thin folio of manuscript miscellaneous poems, in which I believe are the pieces you wish [Mr. Downes] to transcribe,'²⁹ which contained Basse's 'Epitaph on Shakespeare',³⁰ among other pieces.³¹ He also pointed out Spenser's sonnet in the life of Scanderbeg,³² and 'A Description of the Queens (Elizabeth) Entertainment in Progress at Lord Hartford's at Elmtham in Hantshire, 1591',³³ which he found 'at a friend's house in Hampshire.'³⁴ He transcribed portions from the manuscripts of Wood and Aubrey with reference to Spenser,³⁵ Jonson,³⁶ and Shakespeare.³⁷ He sent Wright's *Historia Histrionica*, 1699,³⁸ which had been reprinted as the preface to the eleventh volume of Dodsley's *Plays*, his own copy of the third edition of *Venus and Adonis*,³⁹ and Chettle's *Kind Hart Dreame* from Winchester.⁴⁰ He also arranged for the copy-

²⁹Jun. 22d, 1781, same MSS. no. 1.

³⁰Warton at first ascribed this poem to Donne because it was included in the first edition of his poems in 1633.

³¹The Rawlinson MSS. 14652 (now Rawl. poet. 161) written about 1640, contains 'Shakespeare's epitaph' (fol. 13) and 'one or two pieces (a Sonnet & an Epitaph), signed W. Shakespeare. This Manuscript is about the times of Charles the First.' Letter to Malone, Jun. 22d, 1781, as above.

³²The sonnet beginning 'Wherefore doth vaine Antiquity so vaunt' which appears as a dedicatory poem to *The Historie of George Castriot*, etc. London, 1596.

³³*The honourable Entertainement gieven to the Queenes Majestie in Progresse, at Elvetham in Hampshire, by the right Honorable the Earle of Hertford, 1591*, London, 1591.

³⁴Odiham, Hants. Jul. 29, 1787 [9?] MS. as above, no. 5.

³⁵Sept. 30th. 1789 and 21st Nov. 1789, same MS. nos. 11 and 12.

³⁶Dec. 6, 16, 20, 1789, same MS. nos. 13, 14 and 15.

³⁷16th Dec. same MS.

³⁸'Wright's *Preface* shall also be sent with Shakespeare's Poem.' Trin. Coll. Oxon. Mar. 19, 1785, same MS. no. 2.

³⁹'By a coach of next Thursday you will receive the *Venus and Adonis*. It is bound up with many coeval small poets, the whole making a Dutch-built but dwarfish volume.' (Same letter).

The volume was apparently wanted again two years later, for Warton then wrote to Malone, 'I am exceedingly sorry to be so far from Oxford, as to be hindered from accommodating you immediately with the *Venus and Adonis*. If I should be at Oxford within three weeks, I will send it. Upon Recollection, Dr. Farmer has a Copy, who will undoubtedly lend it with pleasure.' Purbrook-Park, Near Portsmouth, Jul. 29th, 1787. Same MS. no. 7.

⁴⁰Oxon. March 30th., 1785, same, no. 3.

ing of a portrait of the actor Lowin, in the Ashmolean Museum.⁴¹ 'A good engraving' of it, he thought, would be 'a most proper and interesting ornament of your new Edition. . . . I am sure it will make an excellent head.'⁴² Notes on the description and history of Beaulieu and Tichfield for the '*Southampton Memoirs*'⁴³ were quite in Warton's line, and promptly supplied.⁴⁴

Although his literary achievement is his only claim upon posterity, Warton did not regard himself as primarily a man of letters. During the whole of his busy and fruitful literary career he did not neglect what he always considered his first duties, as fellow and tutor of Trinity College, as professor of the University of Oxford, and as clergyman of the Church of England. It is in the last capacity that he is most overlooked, and justly. Yet, although Warton's career as a clergyman is not important in his history, it is not discreditable judged by the standards of his day, nor is it wholly without interest. Neither his talents nor his ambitions lay in the direction of clerical work; he sought no preferments, and his abilities as a divine were not such as to command substantial rewards. Intended by his father for the church as the most honourable calling open to a man of his family and parts and as the one calculated to make least exacting demands upon his time or abilities, yet one which ensured at the worst a comfortable living and at the best almost unlimited opportunities for preferments and distinction should he prove ambitious, Thomas Warton accepted this most natural view of his career. Immediately upon taking his first degree he entered holy orders and proceeded in due time to the divinity degree.⁴⁵ His only preferments were obscure village churches in the neighborhood of Oxford, which had at least the merit of not interrupting his residence there nor interfering much with his scholarly pursuits. His first appointment was to the curacy of Woodstock, Oxfordshire, which he served for nearly twenty years.⁴⁶ In October, 1771, he was

⁴¹In the letter of Mar. 19, 1785, he says, 'I have seen Lowin's picture,' and describes it. He was afraid, however, that the Custos of the *Ashmolean* could not permit the picture to be sent to Town, and two year's later he arranged for Malone's artist to 'work in some of the Apartments of the Museum.' 27th Oct. 1787.

⁴²Oxon. Mar. 30th, 1785.

⁴³See Boswell's edition of Malone's *Shakespeare*, XX, pp. 433-5 for another letter on the same subject.

⁴⁴Purbrook, Aug. 17th, 1787.

⁴⁵A.B. 1747, B.D. 1767. Foster: *Alumni Oxonienses, 1745-1886*, IV, p. 1505.

⁴⁶27 April, 1755 to 3 April, 1774. *Wartoniana*, in *The Literary Journal: a Review of Literature, Science, Manners, Politics for the year 1803*, vol. I. London 1803, p. 601.

presented to the small living of Kiddington,⁴⁷ near Woodstock, which he retained until his death. Two other small livings are also assigned to him, the vicarage of Shalfeld, Wiltshire,⁴⁸ and Hill Farrance, Somerset, the gift of his college.⁴⁹

In the pulpit Warton was probably not very effective. His indistinct and hurried manner of speaking made him very difficult to understand.⁵⁰ In accord with a practice in better repute in the eighteenth century than now, he did not always take pains to write his own sermons, and he preached the same ones repeatedly.⁵¹ When, as a young man who had not yet taken his degree, he had a sermon to prepare and deliver before the university and the bishop, its preparation filled him with some dismay, and he sent his plan in great anxiety to his brother, who replied reassuringly, praising the subject, making suggestions and predicting a successful outcome.⁵² Warton's biographer reports that one university sermon won him much praise, and he praised a Latin sermon of his which he had seen as clear, well-arranged and in good Latin style.⁵³ The two sermons among his papers at Winchester College are entirely mediocre.

If Warton was not distinguished as a preacher, he seems at least to have been satisfactory to the members of his charge in those days of fox-hunting, port-drinking and even more negligent parsons. The people of Woodstock long remembered him with affectionate regard as one of the best curates who ever officiated there.⁵⁴ Certainly he was not

⁴⁷Modern Kiddington. This living was given him by George Henry, Earl of Lichfield, the Chancellor of the University, Oct. 22, 1771. See *Hist. Kid.* 1st ed. p. 11.

⁴⁸1768, see Anderson's *British Poets*, 13 vols. London, 1795, XI, p. 1054.

⁴⁹1782. Mant, *Op. cit.* p. lxxxii.

⁵⁰One of his hearers at Woodstock said, 'though not one in ten could understand half he said, everybody loved him.' *Literary Journal*, p. 601.

⁵¹Chalmers had two sermons that he often preached, but neither was written by him; one was a printed sermon; the other, in an old hand, was thought to be his father's. *Op. cit.* p. 85, note.

⁵²See letters of Joseph to Thomas Warton, May 16 and 20, 1754, Woolf, *Op. cit.* pp. 221 & 233. The second letter is there dated 1755, obviously an error, for it was evidently written just after the other, and both refer to Joseph's removal from Tynesdale to Tunworth, in 1754.

⁵³Mant, *Op. cit.* p. cvii.

⁵⁴'His easy wit and good humour rendered him universally acceptable; and though his pulpit oratory does not appear ever to have entitled him to particular notice, many are still alive who speak of him with more regard and affection than of any person who ever officiated there. The rector, Mr. Halloway, though certainly not a man of genius, was a man after his own heart, as far as convivial and social habits were concerned; and Saturday, Sunday, and part of Monday were generally spent at Woodstock, in the most agreeable manner.' *Lit. Jour.* p. 280.

inaccessible to the members of his flock,⁵⁵ and, if not over-curious as to their spiritual welfare, was not indifferent to their temporal interests, especially of such as were poetically inclined. For example, he took a lively interest in the poetizing of young John Bennet, the son of the parish clerk at Woodstock.⁵⁶

In his later years Warton found his pastoral duties more and more a burden. He never attempted to serve his charges during the long vacations, which he habitually spent with his brother at Winchester; and, as other duties and interests became more absorbing, he came to depend entirely upon an auxiliary. In 1787 he abandoned his charge altogether and made William Mavor, a young Scotch schoolmaster at Woodstock, who had been his curate at Kiddington for some time, his 'perpetual Curate' there.⁵⁷

Warton's curate tells a story of his connection with the parish at Kiddington that shows his generosity. He says that 'after dining with him one Christmas day at the hospitable mansion of the late Edward Gore, Esq. of Kiddington, Warton beckoned him into the hall, and pulling out his purse, thus addressed him; "I expected to have received more money today, Sir—I shall want ten pounds myself to defray the expenses of a journey to London.—You are welcome to all the rest, Sir—All the rest Sir—I wish it had been more"'.⁵⁸ Probably this story

⁵⁵'No man knew better how to unbend than Warton. . . He seemed to delight in the society of women and children with whom he could talk nonsense, or to associate with men in general who were . . . *bon vivants*, wags, or punsters.' *Ibid.*

⁵⁶See *supra*.

⁵⁷Two letters to Mavor record this transaction: 'I beg the favour of you to continue your services for me at Kiddington till the second Sunday of February next, inclusive. After that time, if I should want a *perpetual* Curate at Kiddington (which I believe will be the case, and of which I will give you due Notice) I should wish to appoint *you* above all others. But I beg you to say nothing (at present) to the Family at Kiddington of my thoughts of a *perpetual* Curate. I shall see Mr. Gore very soon, which you may tell him; and that I have engaged you to attend the Church to the 2d Sunday in February, as above. If Bennet could call next Saturday, with your Account up to last Sunday, I will return the money by Him. Oxon. Nov. 26, 1787.'

'The Curacy of Kiddington is your's for the next twelve-months, and most probably will be so for a much longer time, as I have no thought at present of ever serving it myself. I presume you have no objection to the old Terms of Half a Guinea a Sunday. In case of a Burial on week days (a very rare Case) you will please to charge me a [cro (MS. torn)]wn each time. Fees for a Marriage &c., are to be your own. You will please to begin on next Sunday. Whenever you wish to settle, that business shall immediately be done. Oxon, Jan. 28th, 1788.' Bodl. MSS. Montague d. 18, fols. 136 and 135.

⁵⁸*Literary Journal*, p. 601.

can be dated at Christmas 1789, just before Warton's death, for he wrote to Malone from Oxford, December 20th of that year, 'I leave this place on Tuesday, and return 27th Instant. A letter, during that time, will find me at *Edward Gore's Esq at Kiddington near Enstone Oxfordshire*. I hope to be in Town about the 10th of January.'⁵⁹

The relinquishment of his pastoral work is the only sign Warton gave of decreasing vigor, if, indeed, this is to be regarded as a concession to waning strength rather than to increasing interests. At any rate he was still full of projects and surrounded with uncompleted work at the time of his death. Daniel Prince described his rooms at Oxford as literally strewn with manuscripts in small semblance of order,—the tables, chairs, window seats and shelves being covered with papers—in such a fashion as to show that the occupant was interrupted in the midst of his labours.⁶⁰ Until his sixty-first year Warton's health had always been extremely vigorous. He was then, however, attacked by gout. In his journal for 1788 appears this brief note, 'Saturday, Aug. 23. To Bath to Dr. Wilder's Crescent, Gout!'⁶¹ He did not stay long at Bath, however, and was as busy as ever the next year⁶² and more sanguine of his complete recovery than were his friends.⁶³ Two or three weeks before his death he went down to Woodstock to buy a horse, and rode him one morning in the best of spirits, entertaining his companion meanwhile with anecdotes about Woodstock and its early history. Here at Woodstock, while at a gentleman's table, he had a slight paralytic stroke which affected one of his hands.⁶⁴ The second and fatal stroke came suddenly. He spent the evening with a few companions in the Common Room in livelier spirits than usual. Suddenly, however, between ten and eleven o'clock he was seized with a paralytic stroke. He made but one attempt to speak, when he was thought to utter the name of his friend Price, and relapsed into unconsciousness, dying the next afternoon before his brother could arrive at his bedside. He died May 21, 1790, and was buried in the ante chapel of his college on the twenty-seventh with the highest academical honours. The esteem in which Warton was held by the whole university as well as by the members of Trinity College was shown by the unusual honour that the funeral ceremony was attended, at their own request, by the Vice-Chancellor of the University, the heads

⁵⁹Oxon. Decemb. 20th, 1789. Brit. Mus. MSS. Ad. 30375, no. 15.

⁶⁰*Lit. Anec.* III, p. 702.

⁶¹Winchester Journals.

⁶²See his letters to Malone, just quoted.

⁶³Mant, *Op. cit.* p. xcii.

⁶⁴*Lit. Jour.* p. 603.

of houses, and the proctors. His grave is marked by a plain marble slab with a simple Latin inscription.⁶⁵

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THOMAS WARTON,
S. T. B. & S. A. S.
Hujus Collegii Socius,
Ecclesiæ de Cuddington
In Com. Oxon. Rector,
Poetices iterum Prælector,
Historices Prælector Camden,
Poeta Laureatus,
Obiit 21. Die Maii,
Anno Domini 1790,
Ætat. 63.

CHAPTER XII

CONCLUSION.

The influence of Warton's master passion, enthusiastic love of the past, is apparent in all his work. One of his most important contributions to romantic poetry was the revival of interest in mediæval life and poetry. The re-editing of classical authors and the freshening of interest in classical literature were the object of his labours as professor of poetry. The history and illustration of early English literature were the great work of his ripest powers. The study of mediæval architecture was the pursuit of his leisure. Even his politics, his religion, had a backward look; to both he gave the loyalty that he conceived was due to institutions upon which was set the seal of a noble past.

In literature Warton's close study of the past and its relation to the present had given him a clearer vision into the future, so that both his poetry and his criticism have a forward as well as a backward reach. They pointed the direction of progress by showing the beauties of the neglected past, the artificialities of the vaunted present, and the way poetry was to be reclaimed by a return to the earlier traditions. The same love of the past applied in other fields was productive of quite different results; the line of progress in religion and politics did not lie in the direction of a return to mediævalism. Neither Warton's political adherence nor his religious beliefs, therefore, although both were the result of the same love of the past, shows the romantic spirit of revolt and of progress that makes his critical theories significant; they looked backward only, and had no prophetic vision of the future.

And the limits of his interest were singularly narrow. So great was his versatility within his own limited field, so thorough his command of all its divisions, that one is at first inclined to lose sight of the extent of eighteenth century thought and interest in which Warton had no share. His field of interest was almost entirely literary, confined to poetry, criticism, history. In an age of theological unrest, of desperate attempts to reclaim wavering faiths from the abyss of scepticism, of pietistic efforts to save the church from within by an access of spiritual grace, Warton maintained a calm, unreflecting allegiance to the established church of England, without any indication that he was aware of the theological problems of his day. He was even more negligent of philosophical thought. The idealism of Berkeley, the scepticism of Hume, were equally outside his ken; philosophy for him was apparently comprised in Plato and Aristotle. To the great political move-

ments of the day, in both their theoretical and practical aspects, he was likewise indifferent. Neither Rousseau's *Social Contract* nor the thundering of the French Revolution, neither Paine's pamphlets and Burke's speeches, nor the progress of the war in America aroused in him any interest in contemporary events. The Oxford don kept himself secure in his ivory tower from the encroachments of political affairs.

In his relations with the church Warton showed the same ardent enthusiasm and loyalty that he felt for the poets, the literature, of the past. He gloried in its long and honourable history as an institution; he admired the dignity and solemnity of its forms of worship; he enjoyed the beauty of its ritual, its prayers, its music. The established church satisfied the longings of his soul and delighted his æsthetic sense. Warton was essentially a high-churchman; he would have rejected both the barrenness of the Methodist form of worship and its personal emotionalism for much the same reason that he objected to the popular psalmody used in many churches,¹ and for reasons partly æsthetic. His violent antipathy to the Puritans and Calvinists is more readily explained on æsthetic than on doctrinal grounds. He could never forgive the Puritans the ruinous havoc they wrought in the beautiful Gothic churches nor the check given to the progress of poetry by their narrow opposition to all literature not definitely religious.² All his works abound in bitter references to 'Oliver's people,'³ 'Cromwell's intruders',⁴ 'Calvin's system of reformation',⁵ while his too freely expressed religious prejudice against Puritanism makes a real blemish in his study of Milton.

Warton's æsthetic enjoyment of the forms of worship of the English church and the beauty of its choral service was very closely akin to his appreciation of Gothic art. There seems to have been a vein of æsthetic sensibility in this modest Oxford don who, without being melancholy, delighted in 'cloyster's pale', the 'ruined abbey's moss-grown piles', and 'sequester'd isles of the deep dome'; who was overcome with emotion when the Gothic sculptures of New College altar, which had been walled up early in Elizabeth's reign, were displayed to the public;⁶ and whose remark that 'taste and imagination make more antiquarians than the world is willing to allow' applies well to himself.

¹See *Hist. Eng. Poetry*, III, p. 168, 172-3, 194.

²*Observations on the Faerie Queene*, II, p. 279, and *Hist. Eng. Poetry*, III, 461.

³Lee MSS.

⁴*Spec. Hist. Oxford*, 2nd ed. p. 12.

⁵Lee MSS.

⁶Daniel Prince, who sat near Warton on that occasion, said, 'Poor Thomas fetched such sighs as I could not have thought he could breathe', *Lit. Anec.* III, p. 699.

In politics Warton was a Tory, like that other great mediævalist whom he in many ways resembled, an ardent adherent of institutions whose history was long and glorious. His political interest, such as it was, was determined by his absorbing interest in the past. By natural bent and by inheritance his sympathies were Jacobite, though he took no part in the Jacobite cause, and, as laureate, acquiesced in honouring the unromantic Georges as the modern heirs of Alfred and the Edwards. Modern political problems, like those of religion, did not come near him.

The second great passion of Warton's life, and almost a corollary of the first, was his loyalty to Oxford. And Oxford set the limits of his practical interest as the love of the past determined his literary pursuits. Its little round of term-time and vacation, with the occasional diversion of an encænna, was varied only by the long vacations spent at Winchester—where most of his writing was done, the summer tours to architectural ruins, and occasional very brief visits to London to arrange for the publication of his books, and to look in on his literary friends. As a result of this narrowing of interest most of Warton's work, even his poetry, has a decidedly academic flavour. While it never exactly reeks of the lamp, it is impregnated with the atmosphere in which it was produced. Warton's early poetry, both serious and humorous, is strikingly academic, from the *Triumph of Isis* to the *Progress of Discontent* and the *Panegyric on Oxford Ale*. In his later verse this quality is less apparent and shows itself only in the general determination of thought and interest.

Although Warton's love of the past, his appreciation of nature, and his critical method show that he belonged at least as much to the early nineteenth as to the eighteenth century, he was without the uncontrolled emotionalism and the spirit of revolt that marked many writers of the next century; he had the characteristic temper of his own time,—its composure, its restraint, its sound common sense. His mind was normal, healthy, well poised, free from self-searching and introspection; he was disturbed by no perplexing problems of his relation to the universe, no conflict between mind and heart; he seems to have passed through no '*Sturm und Drang*' period. He felt no imperative need of self-revelation; he kept no personal diary, nor poured out his soul in voluminous correspondence,—his letters, which were probably never very numerous, are brief and self-contained; his poetry, too, is restrained rather than full of feeling. Warton's very emotions were objective: they centered in his enthusiastic love for the past, his college, his friends, and his family. He was not, however, cold nor unresponsive; on the contrary he frequently gave evidence of deep feelings, of violent prejudices, of warm attachments, but he had always the control

of them. He seems to have differed much in this respect from his brother, who was demonstrative and emotional. He frequently revealed the *penseroso* mood in his poetry, but it was always serene and contemplative, as in Milton, rather than subjective and gloomy, as in many of his imitators. He was susceptible to beauty in nature, but it evoked from him no gushes of sentiment. He felt strongly the wonderful, the mystical, beauties of Gothic art, but the emotions they aroused were manly and composed.

Warton was said by an acquaintance to have been 'eminently handsome' in his youth, and even later, when sedentary habits, port, and good living had made his features heavy and his frame unwieldy, he was still 'remarkably well-looking'.⁷ But the editor of the *Probationary Odes* described him as a 'little, thick, squat, red-faced man.'⁸ The truth probably lies between the opinion of an admiring friend and the caricature of a satirist. His portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds⁹ in his best manner hangs in the Common Room at Trinity College, and reveals a countenance somewhat heavy and inert; the forehead wide and full; small, clear blue eyes, deep set under straight heavy brows that somehow hide their quiet force from the casual observer; a thin-lipped mouth redeemed from coldness by expressive curves, the downward droop of one corner balanced by a humorous upward turn at the other; and the bright healthy colour of the well-fed Englishman. The face and figure are more suggestive of the 'bon vivant' than the poet; the stolid, idle clergyman than the enthusiastic antiquary; the indolent Oxford don than the industrious scholar. A comparison of his rugged features with his brother's almost feminine smoothness suggests the contrast between the two men. Joseph was painted in a full-bottomed wig and academic gown and band; Thomas in a bob and his ordinary work jacket, none too tidily arranged. Urbanity and sensibility characterize one countenance; reserve and seriousness, the other.

Equal differences distinguished the two brothers in their social intercourse. Joseph was fond of society, affable, communicative, an addition to any society; Thomas was awkward, shy, silent, except in the company of his intimates. In his earlier days Thomas Warton seems to have been much fonder of society than later when his friendships and habits were formed. His natural shyness was increased by studious habits and years of pretty close application to work, and he came to limit his social intercourse more and more to those friends whose tastes were quite congenial with his own. He was particularly averse to the society of strangers, especially those of a literary turn.⁹ Within his

⁷Mant, Op. cit. p. cv-cvi.

⁸Exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1784.

own college gates he was always sociable, gracious in entertaining his friends, fond of lingering with the other Fellows over their evening cakes and ale in the Common Room, but he could seldom be prevailed upon to dine with his friends in other colleges. The unanimous testimony of those who knew him well was that his conversation was singularly fascinating, easy, and lively, 'enriched with anecdote, and pointed with wit', so that he was the life of those social gatherings in which he found himself thoroughly at home.⁹

Socially, however, Thomas Warton fell on evil days. Although naturally genial and fond of congenial society, he was repelled by the formality and artificiality of the polite society of his day. When Fanny Burney at the height of her popularity was invited to dine with the Wartons and some other distinguished men, she gave in her journal this unfavourable account of Thomas Warton: 'Mr. Tom Warton, the poetry historiographer, looks unformed in his manners, and awkward in his gestures. He joined not one word in the general talk, and, but for my father, who was his neighbour at dinner, and entered into a *tête-à-tête* conversation with him, he would never have opened his mouth after the removal of the second course.'¹⁰ It is certain that Thomas Warton was not so fond of the society of young ladies as was his more susceptible brother; he probably had not read Miss Burney's lively but artificial novels, was unable to indulge her in the compliments and deference to which she was accustomed, and felt that he could do little else than fall silent in a company of which she was the presiding genius.

Yet Warton was not without social intercourse among literary men like himself, scholars and poets. He became a member of the Literary Club in 1782, and numbered among his friends some of the most distinguished men of his day both at Oxford and London. Judging from the letters of his London friends and their complaints of his neglect, he might have spent considerable time in a round of pleasant visits. Spence, who had succeeded Warton's father as professor of poetry at Oxford, besought the charity of a visit in the course of his rambles;¹¹ Shenstone entertained him and Lord Donnegal at the Leasowes, and received as a souvenir of the visit a copy of the *Inscriptionum*;¹² Walpole was flattered by notice of his work, and begged the favour of a visit at Strawberry Hill with every antiquarian inducement he could offer,¹³ and a literary friendship and exchange of favours continued for

⁹Mant, *Op. cit.* p. xcix.

¹⁰d'Arblay: *Diary and Letters*, ed. 1891, I, p. 505.

¹¹See Wooll, *Op. cit.* p. 227.

¹²Shenstone's *Works*, 3 vols. Loondon, 1777, III, p. 284.

¹³Wooll, *Op. cit.* pp. 281-3.

some time. Warton's opinion and criticism were sought by many: Julius Mickle begged his approval of a play as the means of securing its acceptance by Garrick,¹⁴ who confirmed Mickle's estimate of the weight of Warton's opinion;¹⁵ Lord Lyttelton aspired to his approbation;¹⁶ and Gerard Hamilton consulted him in regard to a secretary to succeed Burke.¹⁷ In the prosecution of his literary labours, as has been mentioned, he received generous and ready aid from Garrick, Gray, Percy, Bowle, Steevens, Farmer, and many others; and the Bishop of Gloucester and Dr. Balguy were more active in behalf of his candidacy for the professorship of history than he was himself. Warton was easily among the 'lions' of Oxford. Hannah More was delighted at the prospect of dining with him and Johnson and 'whatever else is most learned and famous in this university'.¹⁸ Two Cambridge gentlemen, intending to come to Oxford to have a look at 'the Lions', wrote beseechingly to Gough for letters—'alas! we fear Tom Warton is at Winchester'.¹⁹

Many of Warton's friends were scholars and antiquarians, men to whom he was attracted by their interest in some of the literary subjects in which he delighted. Among them were Toup, the classical scholar, who helped with *Theocritus*; Bowle, the translator of *Don Quixote*; Gough, who consulted him on antiquarian matters;²⁰ Wise, the archeologist at Ellsfield and Radclivian librarian, whose valuable books and personal suggestions were always at Warton's service; Malone, whose careful scholarship made him a congenial spirit, and whom Warton assisted in the preparation of his edition of Shakespeare; and Price, the Bodleian librarian, whom he induced to remove from Jesus to Trinity College,²¹ and who became perhaps his most intimate friend. This industrious and capable but not very original man apparently enjoyed nothing more than performing little tasks of research for his friends, looking up manuscripts and books in the library, having copies of drawings made, etc. He was vastly flattered by Mr. Warton's friendship, and so grieved at his death that he could not be prevailed upon to speak of him nor to contribute to his memoirs.²²

Warton's most distinguished friend was, of course, Dr. Johnson, the great representative of the eighteenth century classicism and com-

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 379.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 380.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 322.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 299 and 305.

¹⁸*Memoirs*, 4 vols. London 1834, I, p. 262.

¹⁹*Lit. Anec.* VIII, pp. 596-7.

²⁰*Ibid.*, VI, p. 180.

²¹*Lit. Illus.* VI, p. 474.

²²*Lit. Anec.* III, p. 703.

nonsense in which Warton shared largely. Their early friendship was rapid and close while they exchanged literary favours and plans.²³ And Dr. Johnson's tastes occasionally jumped with Warton's more revolutionary ones, as when he condemned the 'cant of those who judge by principles rather than perception',²⁴ and when he indulged a youthful fondness for old romances by choosing an old Spanish romance for his regular reading during a visit to Bishop Percy.²⁵ But however well they agreed in details, their ideals were wide apart. Between their theories of criticism and poetry there was almost the whole gulf that separates the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, that separates Addison and Steele from Hazlitt, and *The Shepherd's Week* from *Michael*; and it was scarcely to be bridged by an exchange of visits and notes upon Shakespeare. Their principal interests, too, were quite different. Johnson had no taste for accurate scholarship, and having won a secure reputation with his dictionary, was disposed to yield somewhat to natural indolence, to consume much of his time in the literary conversations for which he is justly famous, and in literary work which is rather the fruit of general reading, of philosophical reflection, and of personal opinion than of exact and laborious research. Warton, on the other hand, was primarily a scholar, and although he admired Johnson as a 'lexicographer, a philosopher and an essayist',²⁶ he could not but disagree with him in important matters of taste and critical judgment, and scorn the superficiality of his scholarship. The real break in their friendship, however, probably came when Johnson touched his friend's most sensitive point by ridiculing his poetry for its laborious and useless resurrection of the obsolete.²⁷ Johnson's protest that he still loved 'the fellow dearly' for all he laughed at him, was in vain; their friendship never recovered its former warmth. Afterwards Johnson is said to have lamented 'with tears in his eyes, that the Wartons had not called upon him for the last four years' and to have declared that 'Tom Warton was the only man of genius, whom he knew, without a heart.'²⁸

There were few contemporary poets who were altogether congenial with Warton and his romantic tastes. Although his relations with Ma-

²³See supra p. 68ff.

²⁴*Life of Pope*, Johnson's *Lives*, Hill ed. III, p. 248.

²⁵Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, Hill ed. I, p. 49.

²⁶Mant, Op. cit. I, p. xxxix.

²⁷Warton's poetry was his dearest literary offspring, and he could not bear ridicule of it. See *Lit. Anec.* III, p. 703. For Johnson's criticism, see supra p. — and Boswell's *Johnson*, III, p. 158, note 3.

²⁸Mant, Op. cit. I, p. xxxix.

son were cordial enough after their first poetical passage-at-arms,²⁹ Warton never held him in much esteem, and described his facile but uninspired style as 'buckram'.³⁰ While Warton greatly admired Gray, with whom he had many tastes in common, their relations were formally, rather than warmly, friendly. In Collins, Joseph Warton's school-fellow at Winchester, the Wartons had a friend of long standing and dear, whose poetical tastes also were congenial.³¹ In Collins's poetry they recognized those poetical qualities they so much admired, which they could exalt in criticism if they could not emulate in their own verse. Thomas Warton frequently visited Collins at Chichester where they talked over literary plans,—Collins's history of the revival of learning and Warton's Spenser, and turned over the pages of old authors they both loved in Collins's valuable library, where Warton was already collecting material for his history. A few years later, when Collins's health failed completely, he was visited and tenderly cared for by Warton both at Oxford and at Chichester, after he had become too feeble for conversation and was but the wreck of the once admired friend.

On his holidays Warton indulged himself somewhat in society not altogether literary and formal, and delighted in it. He enjoyed the hospitality of quondam Oxford friends, now country parsons, who must have been delighted to welcome a college fellow of such

'discerning

Both in good liquor and good learning,'

and to share with him the best cheer that their comfortable country livings afforded. On these vacations, too, he may have had an opportunity to indulge that fondness for low society, for drinking ale in common taverns, that distressed his dignified fellow dons, who had no hankering for society less formally polite than their college intercourse offered. His geniality and friendliness on these occasions no doubt aroused an interest in his architectural researches, facilitated his access to the village church, the ruined castle or abbey of the neighborhood, brought to light any relics of antiquity that might be treasured in the village, and even disposed the vicar, parish boards, or country squires to look with more favour on his suggestions to preserve their ancient treasures from further dilapidation.

Warton's visits to Winchester, also, seem to have been attended

²⁹Warton's *Triumph of Isis* was a reply to Mason's *Isis*.

³⁰Mant, Op. cit. p. xxii and Boswell's *Johnson*, IV, 315.

³¹Collins and Joseph Warton published their first odes in the same year, 1746, and the latter's were more successful at the time. Collins's *Ode on Popular Superstitions* was published anonymously in 1788 with a dedication to the Wartons.

with some social pleasure. The neighborhood was regularly used for regimental camps, which both the Wartons were very fond of visiting. Military sights, the music of fife and drum had a singular charm for both of them, and martial music was always sure to set Thomas's blood a-tingling.³² Consequently Warton's letters to Price during his vacations at Winchester have often some echo of military affairs:—he has been inspecting the regiments in camp at Portsmouth and Plymouth in the course of a 'long camping tour';³³ he has dined so often with Lord Berkeley, head of the South-Gloucester, that, while he declared he had no 'presentiments' of gout, he hopes he may escape it and 'have a few gallops with the Duke of Beaufort's dogs' at his return to Oxford;³⁴ he complains of the dullness of his study at Winchester 'without drumming and fifing';³⁵ or he is going to dine and drink champagne with Hans Stanley, which he fears will 'throw him out a little'.³⁶

Besides these martial delights that attended the long annual visits at Winchester, Warton enjoyed with undignified freedom the society of his brother's pupils. More than one amusing tale is told of his participation in their tasks and frolics. One one occasion, it is said, he overreached himself in preparing a lad's exercise for him, or the boy, in order to escape the flogging he was as apt to get for the poet laureate's verses as for his own, gave a wrong report of the number of 'faults' he was in the habit of making; the Doctor suspected the deception and administered punishment to the real author of the verses. Summoning the boy into his study after school, he sent also for Mr. Warton and had the exercise read for his approval. 'Don't you think it worth half a crown?' asked the Doctor. Mr. Warton assented. 'Well then, you shall give the boy one.'³⁷ On another occasion when he was joining the boys in a raid upon the buttery, the sharp-nosed Doctor descended upon them in wrath hurrying his brother with the rest to the refuge of the nearest dark corner, whence he was drawn forth in his turn by the dumbfounded Doctor.

Even at Oxford Warton seems to have indulged his fondness for low society, for public sights and spectacles, though with some little circumspection, owing to the dignity of his position. His fellow dons were sufficiently shocked when he appeared on the river enjoying his

³²Warton's journals show the same weakness for military life. In 1775 he records a visit to Gen. Oglethorpe, and in 1779 a stop 'at the Duke of Beaufort's at Jennings, two Miles from Camp.' Winchester MSS.

³³Letter to Price, quoted in Mant, *Op. cit.* p. lxxviii.

³⁴Mant, *Op. cit.* p. lxxvii.

³⁵*Ibid.*

³⁶*Ibid.*, p. lxxvi.

³⁷*Ibid.*, p. cv.

pipe with the water-men, and it was related by his biographer as a great scandal that he attended an execution disguised in the dress of a carter.³⁸ A story is told of him that, though probably not quite true, at least indicates that a taste for unconventional amusements was generally ascribed to him. He once could not be found when he should have been preparing a Latin speech for a public occasion, and his friends, knowing that he never could resist following martial music, hit upon the scheme of calling him forth by sending along the streets of Oxford a drum and fife. Before long the professor issued from a favourite tavern 'with cutty pipe in mouth, greasy gown, and dirty band, and began strutting after the martial music, to the tune of "Give the King his own again"'.³⁹ A similar taste is indicated by Daniel Prince's fragmentary account of the Jelly-bag Society; the meeting-place was announced by the irresistible beating of a drum, and Warton was sure to attend 'with his jelly-bag cap on.'⁴⁰ But although the society existed for eight or ten years, no letter-writing gossip has seen fit to tell more of its meetings, who its members were, nor the object and nature of the society. These anecdotes of personal eccentricities—whether true or false—are just what we should expect of the author of the *Companion to the Guide*, and editor—and chief contributor—to the *Oxford Sausage*, and they make the author of the *Observations on the Faerie Queene* and the *History of English Poetry* more likable and human.

But such amusements cannot have wasted much time in so busy and productive a life as Warton's. The stocky, red-cheeked Oxford don gave a life-time of 'academic leisure' to scholarly pursuits. The intervals of lectures and pupils, of pastoral duties and college exercises, Warton devoted to his private work, writing and reading in his own study at Trinity or in the congenial Gothic atmosphere of Duke Humphrey's Ward overlooking Exeter Gardens. His days, though busy, must have been somewhat monotonous; yet in their well-ordered monotony grew slowly and steadily his contributions to the knowledge of his day and ours. It was his custom, said Huntingford, who knew him well both at Oxford and at Winchester, to rise moderately early;⁴¹ this enabled him to do a half day's work before the sleepy college awoke to life, and give him leisure to stroll about and chat with his friends with every appearance of indolence and ease. He regularly spent some time each day in his favourite walks along the Cherwell in meditation

³⁸*Ibid.* p. ciii.

³⁹Hartley Coleridge: *Lives of Northern Worthies*, 3 vols. London, 1852, II, p. 264.

⁴⁰*Lit. Anec.* III, p. 702.

⁴¹Mant, *Op. cit.* p. xcvi.

and in enjoyment of the lovely scene. 'Under the mask of indolence', says the *Biographical Dictionary*, 'no man was more busy: his mind was ever on the wing in search of some literary prey.'⁴²

Warton's success in producing critical and historical work greatly in advance of his age is thus partly accounted for by his persistent and intelligent devotion to his work and the constant enthusiasm which inspired and guided its operations. If, as Johnson said, Thomson saw everything in a poetical light through the medium of his favourite pursuit, so Warton saw all things in the light of his enthusiasm for the past; he subjected all things to a careful scrutiny to determine their relation to his consuming interest in antiquities chiefly literary. He seems to have been impressed very early by the enormous field open to the research of the scholar, and though at times confused by the very multiplicity of matter and unable to distinguish unerringly the gold from the dross, he never abandoned this pursuit nor abated his interest. Modern scholars, whose original research is now necessarily somewhat limited in extent because Warton and his successors canvassed the large field so widely, have frequently spoken with scorn and condescension of Warton's superficiality and inaccuracy in his treatment of a field too large for any one man; but let them conceive, if they will, the ever-growing delight and fascination of advancing into the almost unexplored wilderness of English literature from the eleventh to the seventeenth centuries, with no restrictions and no limitations save those of time and strength and the accessibility of material—rare black-letter texts, first editions, and unedited, even unread, manuscripts; in this scholars' paradise—and, it must be added, with no guide, and in the face of eighteenth century prejudice and disapproval—what modern scholar could have produced anything more valuable than the *Observations on the Faerie Queene* and the *History of English Poetry*; and how many would be (and are) proud to have done much less!

The vigorous personality of this eighteenth century poet-scholar is not without a strong appeal to the modern imagination. One seems at times to catch glimpses of him about his favourite haunts. In his study at Trinity he sits before a plain oak desk piled with rare and curious old folios—the dusty tomes he loved to peruse—and littered with many little notebooks of heavy rough paper in gay marbled pasteboard covers. There is a bottle of port and a glass upon the mantel-piece, and upon a small table, whereon too are many books, the tea-things that the bed-maker has not yet removed. The room is untidily strewn with coats and caps, riding-boots and spurs, old coins, keys, and pipes, and everywhere

⁴²*Ibid.*, p. xcix.

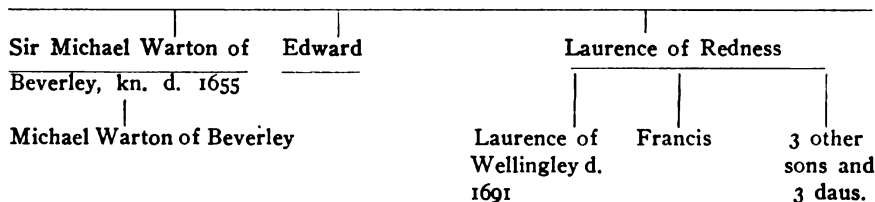
more and more books. The scholar himself is not quite clearly discernible through the blue haze of tobacco smoke; but he has a heavy awkward figure and looks as untidy as his surroundings in his shiny, wrinkled jacket, his rumpled neck-cloth, and his wig too much over one ear. When the eager dreamer would peer into the thoughtful eyes, the figure vanishes and, still pursued in fancy, reappears, a solitary traveler jogging along the tortuous windings of the River Wye upon a steady roadster as sturdy as himself. Alternately enjoying the Welsh scene and losing himself in meditation, the rider turns from the river road and winds his way along the hillside to the castle ruins that crown it. Here he stops to admire the fine view of wooded cliffs and peaceful valley before he crosses the half-filled moat and passes under the rusty old port-cullis to survey the Norman tower rising stoutly strong above the scanty ruins of the later castle which surrounds it. And here we leave him at the close of day trying to decipher an almost obliterated inscription upon the chapel wall—oblivious of the flight of time in his devotion to his own dream of a vanished past.

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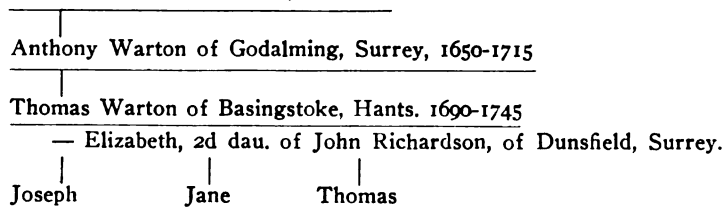
APPENDIX A.

The possible connection of Thomas Warton with the Wartons of Beverley is shown by an excerpt from the Wharton MSS. in the Bodleian Library, 14 f. 12 b. There is no direct proof that the Francis Warton who was born at Redness is the Francis Warton of Breamore who was Thomas Warton's great grandfather.

Michael Warton of Beverley Park



Francis Warton Breamore, Hants.



See Joseph Foster: *Alumni Oxonienses, 1500-1714*, vol. IV, 1577.

APPENDIX B.

A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE PRINTED SOURCES OF WARTON'S

History of English Poetry.

In compiling this list of references from the *History*, and especially from the foot-notes, I have tried to select only those from which historical information is taken. I have omitted mention of works either discussed or cited by way of illustration or comparison; to include these would have nearly doubled the length of the list. I have omitted also the very large number of manuscript sources.

Titles are usually given by Warton in a greatly abbreviated form. I have completed them by diligent search and the examination of many books, carefully comparing hundreds of Warton's references with the originals. When Warton gives no dates and when he probably had access to several editions, I have usually been able to discover the one he used by looking up his references in the various editions. Letters after the titles in my list are used with the following significance:

- a. Warton's references correspond with this edition.
- b. Only edition before Warton's history.
- c. Warton's references are not to page; edition cannot be determined.
- d. Warton's references cannot be found in this edition.
- e. Warton's references do not correspond to any edition in the British Museum or Bodleian Library.
- f. This edition is not to be found in either the British Museum or Bodleian Library.

No letter is used when Warton's date for an edition is correct, and also in a few instances when I have not verified his references in the edition or editions given in my list.

The references to Warton's *History* are to the first edition of volumes two and three, to the second edition of volume one. Since the pages of dissertations I and II are not numbered in that edition, I have made the pagination consecutive through both dissertations, including the numbers in parentheses.

My method of completing Warton's titles may be illustrated by the following titles in which I have preserved the original citation in bold face type:

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**ILLUSTRATIONS OF MEDIEVAL
ROMANCE**

ON

TILES FROM CHERTSEY ABBEY

BY

ROGER SHERMAN LOOMIS

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

1916

PREFACE

It is one of the pleasures of investigation that it brings one into touch with one's fellows on that most reasonable and profitable of planes—community of interest. It is one of the humiliations of publishing the results of one's research that so many debts incurred through this pleasant intercourse cannot be recorded on the title page, but in an unread preface.

To those scholars, whose works alone remain as a generous aid to further research, I make acknowledgment in the bibliography. The chief of my debts to these is that which I owe Dr. Manwaring Shurlock of Chertsey, without whose enterprise in recovering the tiles from destruction and decay these valuable monuments of art and literature might well have been lost. To his work, *Tiles from Chertsey Abbey*, I owe much information about the subject and twenty of the plates in this volume.

My investigation of the subject began at Oxford, where Mr. C. F. Bell of the Ashmolean Museum first brought the tiles to my attention, and where Prof. H. Oelsner favored me with his opinion in regard to the inscriptions. The authorities at the British Museum and the Museum of the Surrey Archaeological Society I wish to thank for permission cordially granted to examine their collections of the tiles. Especially do I wish to record my appreciation of the kindness and interest of Mr. R. L. Hobson, who not only allowed me free access to the fragments at the British Museum on several occasions but also undertook for me the task of securing tracings of many of them.

To Professor Lethaby, who was the first to put forward authoritative conclusions as to the origin of the tiles and their literary source, I owe the honor of frank criticism of some of my identifications and the striking suggestion that Thomas deliberately assigned to Tristram the arms of the English royal house. For this generous assistance I cannot sufficiently express my gratitude.

To Miss Lucy Wheeler of Chertsey, who at the last moment kindly undertook to make certain useful inquiries for me, and to Mr. St. Clair Baddeley of Painswick, Glos., who besides performing similar services, has extended me a most generous hospitality and sympathetic encouragement, I owe a very great debt.

To Prof. Kenneth McKenzie and Prof. N. C. Brooks I am obliged for reading the proofs.

Finally, to the University of Illinois, whose munificent encouragement of research has made this study possible, and which through the personal attention and encouragement of Dean David Kinley and Prof. W. A. Oldfather has rendered every assistance in its power, I wish to express my loyal appreciation.

ROGER SHERMAN LOOMIS

May 23, 1916

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I

No reader of medieval literature will need be told that among the romantic themes of medieval song and story none threw a more potent spell over the mind of Christendom than that of Tristram and Isolt. It was one of the earliest to express the feeling and philosophy of the new courtly love. It was also the most far reaching in its influence and the most enduring. Its impregnation of the fertile fancies of the medieval period bore fruit, as is well known, in many literary versions of the tale, written in many languages. Even more striking as an indication of its pervasive working is the rich flowering of the theme in medieval decorative art. Its scenes of passion and adventure had lingered in many creative minds. Those minds which expressed themselves through the medium of language embodied the scenes in various literary forms, aflame with emotion or glittering with the subtleties of casuistical sentiment. Minds given to plastic expression, though equally smitten doubtless by the dramatic poignancy of the tale, could not interpret feeling, but rendered with what skill was in each of them, through form and color and design, an imaginative vision of the great theme. Perhaps the most magnificent of these interpretations by imagery is the series of pictures which adorn the greater number of what are known as the Chertsey Tiles. To discuss these tiles in their various aspects will be the main object of this study. Before doing so, however, let me first, excluding the illuminated MSS., pass in review the numerous medieval illustrations of the Tristram romance. These so far exceed in number the extant illustrations of the other romances that they witness vividly to the overwhelming popularity of this tale with the patrons and producers of the decorative arts.¹

The extant examples which I have been able to discover fall into two classes: those which occur as separate, individual scenes, and those which form groups or series. Of these series the earliest are the Chertsey Tiles, dating from 1270, which I have already referred to and with which later I shall concern myself at length. They derive their name

¹The best general study of medieval art illustrative of the romances is that by von Schlosser in *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des Allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses*, XVI, pp. 156 ff. M. E. Hucher has written on *Les représentations de Tristan et Yseult dans les manuscrits du Moyen Age*, and reproductions from such manuscripts are found in many illustrated histories of medieval literatures. The list which I am about to give of Tristram illustrations outside the manuscripts owes a great deal to the previous list given by Prof. Golther in his book, *Tristan und Isolde in den Dichtungen des Mittelalters*, pp. 408-12.

from the fact that they were excavated from the site of Chertsey Abbey on the Thames. Most of the fragments are now stored in the British Museum. Of the forty-three designs of romantic subjects surviving in whole or in part, thirty-four probably illustrate the Tristram romance composed by the Anglo-Norman Thomas.²

The second series of illustrations occurs on an ivory casket, now preserved at the Hermitage Museum, Petrograd. It was made in northern France near the beginning of the fourteenth century. It contains ten scenes based mainly on Thomas, from the drinking of the potion to Tristram's revelation of himself to Isolt through the ring.³

The third is found on an embroidered hanging at the nunnery of Wienhausen in Hannover. It was probably made in that district between 1300 and 1325. It contains twenty two scenes, from Tristram's sallying to the fight with Morold to the potion scene, some apparently based on Eilhart von Oberg's version and others on that of Gottfried von Strassburg. At Wienhausen there are fragments of two other Tristram hangings of the same style and date.⁴

At Erfurt is preserved an embroidery intended as a table cover. Its date lies about 1350, and the workmanship is Thuringian. The twenty-six scenes, based on Eilhart, cover the events from the swallows' bringing of the golden hair to Mark's punishment of the dwarf.⁵

A German embroidered hanging of about the same date is kept at the South Kensington Museum. It contains thirteen scenes illustrating Tristram's slaying of the dragon, the treachery and discomfiture of the steward, and, as I conjecture, the tryst of the lovers at the fountain, and their discovery in the grotto.⁶

At the same place we find a Sicilian embroidered coverlet of the third quarter of the fourteenth century, which forms a pair with another coverlet preserved at Usella in Italy. Together they contain twenty two scenes, and treat the story from the departure of Tristram from King Ferramont to the wounding of Tristram by Amorold. The version followed by the designer cannot be any of the Italian versions now known.⁷

At the castle of St. Floret near Issoire in Auvergne is preserved a series of about forty mural paintings dating from the middle of the

²A bibliography is given on pp. 16 f.

³F. Michel, *Tristan*, I, p. lxxiii.

⁴H. W. H. Mithoff, *Archiv für Niedersachsens Kunstgeschichte*, II, p. 9, pl. II and VI.

⁵*Anzeiger für Kunde der Deutschen Vorzeit*, 1866, col. 14.

⁶D. Rock, *Textile Fabrics*, p. 77. Figured H. Jourdain, *English Secular Embroidery*, p. 20.

⁷*Romania*, 1913, p. 517.

fourteenth century. No adequate study has been made of them, but since one scene portrays the tryst of the lovers at the fountain, and the names, Forest Perilous, Morgan le Fay, Cornwall, and King Mark, are decipherable among the inscriptions, I conclude that at least a number of these paintings deal with the Tristram legend as told in the French prose romance.⁸

At the castle of Runkelstein near Bozen in the Tyrol are certain excellently preserved mural paintings of about 1400. There are three series in all, one illustrating *Garel von dem Blühenden Thal*, another *Wigalois*, and the third Gottfried's *Tristan*. Of the last series some have been destroyed, but reproductions, somewhat crude, of sixteen scenes have been published. They cover the story from the flight with Morold to Isolt's attempt to have Brangoene slain.⁹

Finally at the Kunstgewerbe Museum, Dresden, is to be found a tapestry of Alsatian workmanship dated 1539. It contains twenty one scenes, from the marriage of Ribalin to the drinking of the potion, and is based on a German prose romance printed at Augsburg in 1498.¹⁰

The scene of the tryst at the fountain, which I have already mentioned as occurring among the mural paintings at St. Floret, and which occurs also on the Petrograd casket, the Erfurt embroidery, and the Runkelstein paintings, enjoyed a peculiar independent popularity, being found frequently in medieval art isolated from any other illustrations of the Tristram legend.¹¹ The same scene is treated independently in literature also.¹² The story runs to the effect that Mark, suspecting

⁸*Mémoires Lus à la Sorbonne, Archéologie*, 1863, p. 67. C. Enlart, *Manuel d' Archéologie*, II, p. 165. Two scenes figured in Gellis-Didot, Laffillée, *Peinture Décorative en France*.

⁹Zingerle, Seelos, *Freskenyklus des Schlosses Runkelstein*.

¹⁰*Bau- und Kunstdenkmäler des Königreichs Sachsen*, VIII, p. 62. *Germania*, XXVIII, p. 1.

¹¹The *motif* was incorporated with a number of other common art *motifs* in a French compilation called the *Cy Nous Dit*, and provided with a highly edifying moral. One such illumination is figured and the accompanying inscription published in the *Mémoires de la Société des Antiquaires du Centre*, II, pl. II, p. 18. The latter runs: "Ci nous dit coment une royne et uns chevaliers sestoient assiz sous un arbre seur une fontaine pour parler de folles amours; et se prinstrent a parler de bien et de courtoisie parce quils virent en la fontaine lombre dou rois qui les guaitoit desseur larbre. Se nous ne nous guardons de penser mal et dou faire, pour lamour de Nostre Segneur qui voit toutes nos pensees, nous guarderions en nous sa paiz, si com la royne et li chevaliers garderent la paiz dou rois: quar pluseurs sont qui leurs segneurs temporelz guardent miex la paiz, qui ne les voit que par dehors, quils ne font la paiz de Nostre Segneur qui toutes leurs pensees voit dedens et dehors."

¹²Gottfried von Strassburg, *Tristan*, ed. Hertz, note 100.

the fidelity of his wife, and learning that she is to meet Tristram at a certain fountain, hides himself beforehand in a tree overhanging the trysting place. Tristram, arriving soon afterwards, happens to espy the reflection of Mark's face in the water (or, according to certain versions, the king's shadow on the ground). Isolt approaches, and seeing that Tristram offers no welcome, becomes alarmed and discovers in turn the presence of Mark. Together the lovers conspire so to upbraid each other that the royal spy is completely hoodwinked, and takes the first opportunity to recall them to the court.

This scene enjoyed a particular vogue with a school of ivory carvers in northern France, who, besides the Petrograd casket, produced other caskets where the meeting of the lovers at the fountain occurs among various scenes of a romantic character. Such caskets are to be found at the South Kensington Museum,¹³ at the British Museum,¹⁴ at Cracow Cathedral,¹⁵ in the Hainauer Collection at Berlin (1911),¹⁶ and in the Morgan Collection, now on loan at the Metropolitan Museum, New York.¹⁷ Other examples of the subject carved in ivory by French craftsmen are three fourteenth century mirror cases, one formerly in the Collection Spitzer,¹⁸ one in the Vatican Library,¹⁹ the third in the Hotel de Cluny, and a comb of the early fifteenth century in the possession of the Bamberg Historical Society.²⁰ French too were the makers of a *cuir-bouilli* case for writing tablets at Namur,²¹ a wooden box in the South Kensington Museum,²² and a corbel at the house of Jacques Coeur at Bourges.²³ An English example of the subject occurs on a misericord at Chester cathedral,²⁴ and a German on a tapestry in the town hall of Regensburg.²⁵

¹³W. Maskell, *Ivories in the South Kensington Museum*, p. 64.

¹⁴O. M. Dalton, *Catalogue of Ivory Carvings in the British Museum*, p. 125. *Burlington Magazine*, V, p. 303.

¹⁵*Romanische Forschungen*, V, p. 241.

¹⁶*Revue de l'Art Chrétien*, 1911, p. 398. John Carter, *Specimens of Ancient Sculpture*.

¹⁷*Collection Spitzer*, I, pl. 21. An article by myself on this casket will appear shortly in *Art in America*.

¹⁸*Collection Spitzer*, I, p. 49. E. Molinier, *Arts Appliqués à l'Industrie*, I, pl. 29.

¹⁹*Gazette des Beaux Arts*, ser. III, vol. XXXIII, p. 399.

²⁰Becker and Hefner, III, pl. 13. Suchier, Birch-Hirschfeld, *Französische Literatur*, ed. 1913, I, p. 115. Hefner Alteneck, ed. 2, vol. IV, pl. 252.

²¹Viollet-le-Duc, *Dictionnaire du Mobilier*, II, p. 157.

²²No. 2173, '55.

²³Viollet-le-Duc, *Dictionnaire de l'Architecture*, IV, p. 505.

²⁴*Chester Archaeological Journal, New Series*, V, p. 52.

²⁵*Germania*, XVIII, p. 276.

In a painting of three famous pairs of lovers at Runkelstein appear Tristram and Isolt.²⁶ Likewise on a Sicilian coverlet in the possession of the Marquis of Azzolino their figures were worked, but the upper halves have been cut off.²⁷

It is a strange thing that when so many of the French tapestries of the fifteenth century which remain to us depict romantic material, none of them should deal with Tristram, nor do I know among the many such tapestries mentioned in contemporary inventories one on this subject. But that this neglect was characteristic of only a single craft is shown by the inventory, written in 1384 and 1385, of the enameled objects belonging to Louis, Duke of Anjou, which discloses a partiality for this theme among the workers in metal and enamel. It mentions two hanaps enameled with scenes from the romance, and another on which appear "Tristan et Ysieu et la teste du roy Marc en une arbre."²⁸ The same authority describes a salere of silver gilt, the foot of which consists of a tree, in which "est le roy marc, et dessous sont yseut et tristan, tout ouvree de taille tres delieement, et devant eulz, ou dit pie, a une piece de cristal en maniere de fontaine, et dedens ycelle fontaine pert la teste du Roy Marc."²⁹

Furthermore, not only do we have the literature of the Tristram theme and the reflections of that literature in medieval art, but also a number of literary references to those artistic reflections. The romance of *L'Escoufle* (date 1200-25) gives an elaborate description of a golden

²⁶Zingerle, Seelos, *op. cit.*, pl. I.

²⁷*Romania*, 1913, p. 562. While aiming at the inclusion in this list of all the illustrations of the romance extant, I have purposely omitted cases where the connection with Tristram has been rashly assumed. One such case is that of the mural paintings from the Palazzo Teri, preserved at San Marco, Florence, which are mentioned in the *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, ser. IV, vol. VI, p. 235, as treating this theme. Another is the frequently cited identification of a pair of lovers who among a number of others were painted on the walls of a house at Constance, now destroyed, and who should probably be identified instead as Paris and Helen. Vide *Mittheilungen der Antiquarischen Gesellschaft in Zürich*, XV, p. 228. A third consists in the association with Tristram of a number of conventional love scenes on an ivory comb figured in Suchier, Birch-Hirschfeld, *Französische Literatur*, ed. 1913, I, p. 117. The tapestry at Langensalza mentioned by A. Schultz in his *Deutsches Leben im XIV und XV Jahrhundert*, p. 91, has attached to it a fragmentary inscription bearing the names of the lovers but itself illustrates the legend of St. Eustace. Vide *Bau- und Kunstdenkmäler der Provinz Sachsen*, VI, p. 56. The existence of the misericord at Bristol cathedral referred to in the *Chester Archaeological Journal*, N. S., V, p. 52, has been denied by those of whom I have inquired.

²⁸M. de Laborde, *Notice des Émaux du Musée du Louvre*, II, Nos. 348, 370, 563.

²⁹*Ibid.*, II, No. 512.

hanap, worth ten marks, on which were enameled five scenes from the lives of these famous lovers.³⁰ Their figures appeared also in a gold cup described by the troubadour Peire Cardinal (*fl.* 1210-30);³¹ on the painted arson of a saddle described by the Catalan Guillem Torelha (*ca.* 1250);³² on a cloth described in *Floriant and Florete* (1250-75);³³ on a jeweled cloth described in *Emaré* (1350-1400);³⁴ and in mural paintings described in the Italian *Intelligenza* (14th century),³⁵ in Chaucer's *Parlement of Foules* (1382?),³⁶ and in Lydgate's *Temple of Glas* (1403?).³⁷

II

The tiles from Chertsey Abbey possess an interest greater than all the other artistic treatments of the Tristram story. In the first place, there is an odd irony in the fact that these illustrations of a theme which exalted the indulgence of unsanctified passion should have been so conspicuously displayed in buildings from which all thought of passion, sanctified or unsanctified, was theoretically banished. The tiles, furthermore, exceed in numbers, if we exclude the manuscripts, any other series of illustrations of this subject. Then too, there is their early date: even the Munich manuscript is later. In the fourth place, the tiles are remarkable for their fidelity to the Anglo-Norman version by Thomas, as far as we are able to reconstruct it from fragments that remain and the various redactions based upon it. Finally, it is no exaggeration to say that they stand high among the remaining monuments of the best period of Gothic art. Prof. W. R. Lethaby says of the figure designs, "They must have been drawn by one of the ablest masters of the second half of the thirteenth century:"³⁸ and of the pattern tiles, "They are as fine of their kind as the picture tiles."³⁹ Of the pavement in its completeness the same eminent authority declares, "The Chertsey tiles were the most remarkable works of the kind made in England, and none are known in France which can compete with them."⁴⁰ Mr. R. L. Hobson

³⁰Pub. Soc. des Anc. Textes Fr., II. 579 ff.

³¹Mahn, *Gedichte der Troubadours*, IV, p. 89.

³²Mila y Fontanals, *Poètes Catalans*, p. 12.

³³Pub. Roxburghe Club, II. 843 ff.

³⁴Ed. E. Rickert, I. 134.

³⁵Ed. P. Gellrich, p. 147.

³⁶L. 290.

³⁷L. 77.

³⁸*Annual of the Walpole Society*, II, p. 70.

³⁹*Ibid.*, II, p. 77.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, II, p. 79.

of the British Museum speaks of the same as "one of the finest, if not the finest, inlaid pavement in existence."⁴¹

The history of the discovery and collecting of the tiles has been told before, but must here be repeated in its main outlines. After the dissolution of the monasteries, Chertsey Abbey, a Benedictine foundation, mentioned by Bede as early as the seventh century, underwent the usual process of spoliation. The masonry became a quarry for the neighborhood, and the monuments and decorative furnishings were marred, scattered, or destroyed. Today on the site scarcely a vestige is left of one of the richest and most splendid of English monasteries. In 1853 Dr. Manwaring Shurlock, a surgeon with antiquarian tastes, came to live at Chertsey, and his ardent interest in a number of tile fragments, found in a heap of debris, led to the organization of a fund for excavating the site of the abbey church. In 1861 the abbey estate changed hands, and under the supervision of the new owner, Mr. Angell, and with the support of the Surrey Archaeological Society, the whole site of church and chapter house was exposed and many more fragments added to the collection. Dr. Shurlock, meanwhile, had pushed his search in the neighborhood, and rescued odd bits from dredgings in the Thames, the pavement of a pigsty, and other sources. He undertook the piecing together of all these materials, and discovered from broken inscriptions that some of the tiles dealt with Tristram and some with Richard Coeur de Lion. After a period of consultation and communication with Sir Gilbert Scott, Albert Way, Baron de Cosson, and Paulin Paris, he published in 1885 *Tiles from Chertsey Abbey*, which included numerous large lithographic plates of the tile designs and an explanatory text embodying the suggestions and expert testimony of these archaeologists and philologues. It is a handsome volume, and though the identifications and archaeological comment are now to a considerable extent obsolete, yet it is more thorough-going and accurate than anything preceding it.

The great bulk of the tile fragments thus gathered together are kept in the stores of the Department of British and Medieval Antiquities at the British Museum, including those which at first belonged to the Architectural Museum. A small collection is to be found at the museum of the Surrey Archaeological Society at Guildford, and one fragment at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. Several interesting pieces found their way at some unknown period into the church of Little Kimble, Bucks., and were laid down in 1872 in the chancel floor. A number of rather insignificant bits were purchased about 1825 and laid down to pave a summer house on what is now Sir Albert Rollit's estate, St. Ann's Hill, Chertsey. There are small private collections, which I have not

⁴¹R. L. Hobson, *Catalogue of English Pottery*, p. 40.

seen, in the possession of Capt. Lindsay of Sutton Courtney, Berks., and Lord Granby.

Meanwhile in the year 1870 during excavations on the site of Halesowen Abbey near Birmingham, a number of tile fragments, apparently made with local clay but from the same moulds as those at Chertsey, were discovered. There were also other tiles, and one (figured Shurlock, pl. 35, Wheeler, p. 38) depicting a seated abbot and bearing the inscription, ISTUD OPUS NICHOLAS MATRI CHRISTI DEDIT ABBAS, is of special interest. Since Abbot Nicholas of Halesowen died in 1298, a *terminus ad quem* for the laying of the Halesowen pavement is fixed. There were no inscriptions found here that had reference to the romance tiles. The subjects seem to have been derived from the romance of Tristram alone and not from that of the Lion Heart. The tiles found at Halesowen in whole or in part are those figured in the following plates of the present study: 4, 5, 7, 9, 13, 19, 20, 21, 22, 26. Mr. J. R. Holliday, who conducted the work here, and who now has the fragments in his possession, gave a generally reliable account of them in the *Transactions of the Birmingham and Midland Institute* for 1871, p. 65. He has informed me that at one time in the church of St. Kenelm, near Halesowen, one of these tiles had formed a part of the pavement within the altar rails, but on a visit there in 1912 I found it gone and highly glazed modern productions in its place.

III

Since the discovery of the tiles a number of notices and publications have been devoted to them, without, however, making their existence known beyond the circle of British architects and antiquaries. Of these publications the standard is the already mentioned *Tiles from Chertsey Abbey* by Manwaring Shurlock in 1885. A more up-to-date account of the manufacture and technical qualities of the tiles is found in the official *Catalogue of English Pottery in the British Museum*, by R. L. Hobson, pp. 40 ff. The most scholarly discussion of the archaeology and literary relations of the tiles is an article by Prof. W. R. Lethaby, in the *Annual of the Walpole Society* (London), II (1913), pp. 69 ff. These three may be said to constitute the chief authorities. For the Halesowen Tiles the article by J. R. Holliday in the *Transactions of the Birmingham and Midland Institute*, 1871, p. 65, is the sole authority.

The earliest extended and illustrated account of the designs appeared in *Specimens of Tile Pavements*, by Henry Shaw, 1858, of which pl. XIII-XXII depict a number of Chertsey examples. Other notices are to be found as follows:

Surrey Archaeological Collections, I, p. 115. *Some Account of the Encaustic Tiles and Stone Coffins Excavated on the Site of Chertsey Abbey in 1855*, by W. W. Pocock.

Surrey Archaeological Collections, VII, p. 288. *Chertsey Tiles*, by Major Heales.

The Builder, 1858, p. 502. *What We Learn from the Chertsey Tiles*, by W. Burges.

The Building News, 1878, p. 290. *Note on the Chertsey Tiles*, by R. Druce. Accompanied by plates.

Lucy Wheeler, *Romance Tiles of Chertsey Abbey*. Wells, Gardner, Darton & Co. 1913.

Modern Language Review, 1915, p. 304. *A Sidelight on the Tristan of Thomas*, by R. S. Loomis.

Publications of the Modern Language Association of America, 1915, p. 509. *Richard Coeur de Lion and the "Pas Saladin" in Medieval Art*, by R. S. Loomis.

IV

The tiles depicting romantic subjects, with which we are mainly concerned, are for the most part round and $9\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter. Some of the subjects, however, which are found on round tiles are also found on square tiles, accompanied by two decorative pilasters on each side. Indeed, some of the designs, viz. Figs. 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, seem to have been specially adapted to a rectangular frame. The material and manufacture of the tiles is thus described by Mr. Hobson: "The red clay tile was stamped with the pattern, and the cavities filled with white clay, and the whole coated with a transparent yellowish lead glaze. . . . From the presence of a metallic oxide, whether accidental or intentional, the surface frequently became dark green or black with the firing, sometimes graduated from the usual red brown to black: the artist made skilful use of this to vary the surface and by clever counter-changing, especially of the smaller tiles, he avoided any monotony of effect."⁴²

When the pavement was laid down, the round tiles were sometimes fitted into a circular band of grotesque monsters, but generally into an inscription describing the subject. Examples of these may be seen on the following page. Since, however, the inscriptions have been invariably separated from the pictorial tiles, they have in no case afforded any clue to the identification. The round tiles encircled by the inscriptions were in turn framed by tiles of various shapes adorned

⁴²R. L. Hobson, *op. cit.*, p. 41.



BORDER TILES

with exquisite foliage patterns of a conventionalized type. Foliage tiles of a similar or identical patterns have been found on the sites of Hailes, Haughmond, and Waverley Abbeys, at Cowdray, and in Westminster chapter house. Many small round tiles with head designs on them formed a part of the great decorative scheme. There were also discovered at Chertsey a series of small rectangular tiles representing the Signs of the Zodiac, and another bearing the Labors of the Months. For details of these the reader must consult Shurlock and Hobson.

Besides all these a large design of three figures under a canopy was pieced together, of which at least seven copies must have been made, since Shurlock testifies to having had in his possession seven pieces bearing the same portion of one figure. Though the panel has no connection with the series which are the special subject of this study, it may be well to quote Prof. Lethaby's comment: "It has been said that the figures cannot be those of saints, for they are without nimbuses; but the crouching figures on which the king and the archbishop stand show that they were martyrs, probably St. Thomas and St. Edmund. . . . They are later in style than the romance tiles, and can hardly be earlier than about 1310-20. They must represent a queen (Isabelle?) between two saints. The queen carries a squirrel, a fashion of the fourteenth century."⁴³

The assumption made by Prof. Lethaby that the tiles are of English manufacture runs counter to the theory stated in Shurlock that they were imported from France. The only serious piece of evidence submitted in support of the French origin is the dogmatic statement of Paulin Paris: "The inscriptions of the history of Tristram are in the French language, not in the Anglo-Norman dialect, but in very good French of Picardy or Artois."⁴⁴ Prof. H. Oelsner of Oxford, however, to whom I submitted transcripts of practically all the accessible inscriptions, said that it was not possible to determine the question of dialect from the literally fragmentary evidence. A weighty consideration in favor of English origin is the fact that the designer used the Anglo-Norman romance as the basis of his Tristram scenes and what must have been either an Anglo-Norman or English text as the basis of his Richard scenes. The very presence of Richard at all in the work of a French artist of this period is improbable. Finally the opinion of connoisseurs, once divided as to the style of the designs, is now agreed that it is characteristically English, and Prof. Lethaby but adds his voice to those of other authorities.

⁴³*Annual of the Walpole Society*, II, pp. 76 f.

⁴⁴M. Shurlock, *Tiles from Chertsey Abbey*, p. 10.

V

It is to Prof. Lethaby alone, however, that we owe not only the one serious contribution to the early history of the tiles but also a contribution which is suggestive of striking conclusions. I can do no better than quote his words: "In the chapter house at Westminster Abbey there still remains the original tiled floor laid down between 1253 and 1258. Some of these are picture tiles, others are patterns, and there are inscriptions made up of separate letters like some of those at Chertsey. The Westminster tiles are perhaps a little earlier in style, but they are closely akin to the Chertsey tiles. They must have been made at the same place by the same able artist . . . They are similar in thickness and technique, and the style of drawing and the rendering of drapery are alike in both sets. The throned kings are almost identical in both, and the two huntsmen at Westminster are closely like the figures of Tristram. The harps and hands of the harpers are similar in both. We have seen above that at Westminster there is one detached tile⁴⁵ exactly like those which form the great ornamental squares at Chertsey, and this gives us a direct link of connection between the royal works and the Chertsey tiles. Again it is known that the tiles at Westminster were brought by water, possibly from Windsor.⁴⁶ Fragments of Chertsey tiles⁴⁷ have recently been found at Hailes Abbey, which was built by Richard of Cornwall, brother of Henry III, the builder of Westminster Abbey. Now Chertsey is close to Windsor, and must have often been visited by the king.⁴⁸ . . . The duel of King Richard and Saladin, as we have seen, was a favorite royal subject, and some border patterns are designed with castles and fleur de lis, and others with crowns. . . The floor of the Westminster chapter house, by the same artist, was laid down for the king, and his brother used Chertsey tiles at Hailes; it is not unlikely therefore that the Chertsey floor was a royal gift. . . If we date the tiles of Abbot Nicholas c. 1280-90 and the tiles of Westminster chapter house 1255, the romance tiles may be dated 1260-70. . . They were made in the South of England, probably at Chertsey itself; one point in proof of this is the great variety of tiles used at the Abbey, some being manifestly later than others in date."⁴⁹ Miss Wheeler speaks of the estate of Sandgates, with the adjacent district of Hanworth, on the South-

⁴⁵Foliage pattern.

⁴⁶Or from Chertsey itself, if that was the seat of the tile factory.

⁴⁷Foliage pattern. *Vide* St. Clair Baddeley, *A Cotswold Shrine*.

⁴⁸*Annual of the Walpole Society*, II, p. 78.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, II, p. 79.

ern border of Chertsey, as "most probably the site of the medieval potteries."⁵⁰ What basis there is for this supposition I cannot say.

To recur to the matter of date, it must be said that until a really scientific history of costume, based on accurately datable sources, such as we have for the later Middle Ages in Druitt's *Costume on Brasses*, is provided for the early Middle Ages as well, the attempt to fix closely the dates of the monuments of art must be ineffectual. It is certainly a discredit to archaeological scholarship that after a hundred years of study the date of so important a monument as the Bayeux "Tapestry" can be placed by different writers at opposite ends of a period of seventy-five years. In the case of the tiles, however, while the pinning down of the date with precision must await the publication of such a scientific history of costume, yet we may place them tentatively at about the year 1270, with some assurance that we are not more than ten years out of the way. Baron de Cosson contributed to Shurlock's work a discussion of the armor represented on the tiles, and came to the conclusion that it was of a type worn in England between 1270 and 1280, and that the earlier of these dates is nearer the truth. He was probably led to date the tiles somewhat too late by the fact that he believed that ailettes, such as are represented on pl. 16 and 43, were not worn before 1274. The Psalter of St. Louis, however, which can be dated between the years 1252 and 1270, depicts ailettes of a very similar character.⁵¹ The costume I take to be slightly later than that depicted in the Painted Chamber at Westminster, executed between 1262 and 1277.⁵² In this masterpiece of medieval decoration the great helm does not frequently appear, nor does the ailette, save once⁵³ when the form suggests that it was inserted in a late restoration. As in the tile designs the poleyns or knee-cops are absent, and housings for the destriers seem reserved for kings only. The evidence put forward by Prof. Lethaby and the evidence of the costume combine to show that the tiles were designed in the last years of the reign of Henry III, the connoisseur king. They may even have been a royal gift to the Abbey of Chertsey. But the markedly secular and, for the medieval church at least, immoral character of the theme treated has suggested to Mr. Burges and Prof. Lethaby that their original destination was not a monastery, but a prince's palace. It may even be that it was not the bounty of Henry that brought these romance tiles to Chertsey, but the accession to the throne (1272) of the bluff warrior Edward I, which

⁵⁰Lucy Wheeler, *Romance Tiles from Chertsey Abbey*, p. 33.

⁵¹*Psautier de St. Louis*, ed. H. Omont, pl. XLVI, XLVIII, LIII, LXXV.

⁵²*Burlington Magazine*, VII, p. 260.

⁵³*Vetusta Monumenta*, VI, pl. 35, fig. 12.

left the tiles commissioned by his father on the hands of the abbey. Such a theory, however, involves too many assumptions to be anything more than a surmise. In either case the monastic authorities seem to have adjusted their scruples to the admission of these magnificent illustrations of a passionate romance within the walls of their most sacred edifice: nor did the chapter of Halesowen, some few years later, hesitate to follow suit.

Prof. Lethaby's theory of a connection between these tiles and a series of illustrations of Gottfried von Strassburg's *Tristan* in a MS. at Munich is, in my opinion, not so fortunate.⁵⁴ I have not, it is to be confessed, had access either to the MS. or to the collections of photographs from it at the South Kensington Museum since the question came to my attention, but I have seen a number of reproductions.⁵⁵ These do not present any resemblance in artistic style, in choice or treatment of incident, which is not accounted for by the fact that their respective designers followed related literary versions of the story and were guided by those artistic traditions for handling the different types of subject which, despite their variations, were yet so uniform for the whole of Europe.

VI

Of primary importance, however, among the decorative works of the period for purposes of comparison are the little square tiles from Westminster chapter house already referred to in the quotation from Professor Lethaby. Although I am not convinced that they were made by the same artist as the Chertsey designs, yet the art is strikingly similar. Reproductions of these Westminster tiles are found in Prof. Lethaby's *Westminster Abbey and the King's Craftsmen*, pp. 50-53.

Another work that may not unprofitably be compared with the Chertsey Tiles is the Painted Chamber at Westminster Palace, already alluded to, executed at King Henry's orders between the years 1262 and 1277. Two of the King's painters, Master Walter and Master William, the latter a monk of Westminster Abbey, were employed on this magnificent work.⁵⁶ It is described by two Franciscans who saw it in 1322 as "that celebrated chamber on whose walls all the warlike histories of the whole Bible are painted with inexpressible skill, and explained by a regular and complete series of texts, beautifully written in French over each battle, to

⁵⁴*Annual of the Walpole Society*, II, p. 70.

⁵⁵Vogt and Koch, *Deutsche Literaturgeschichte*, p. 123; Könnecke, *Bilderatlas*, ed. 2, p. 57; Schultz, *Höfisches Leben*, ed. 2, vol. I, pp. 147, 166, 276, 316, 323, 424.

⁵⁶*Burlington Magazine*, VII, pp. 260 and 269.

the no small admiration of the beholder and the increase of royal magnificence." Although the remains of these paintings were destroyed by fire in 1834, two sets of copies made from them still exist. One set was reproduced in *Vetusta Monumenta*, vol. VI. Oddly enough, few resemblances can be noted between them and the designs of the Chertsey Tiles.

Another English work of considerably greater interest in this connection is the manuscript of the *Lives of the Offas*, MS. Cotton, Nero D 1, in the British Museum. The illuminations have generally been attributed to the hand of Matthew Paris himself, but the armor depicted seems to be of far too advanced a type to have been drawn by a man who died in 1259. There are among the illuminations many which betray a close resemblance to the tile designs, and in such cases I have called attention to the fact in my treatment of the individual tiles. A very large number of the illuminations were reproduced, somewhat crudely, by Strutt in his *Horda Angelcynna*, vol. I.

A much smaller series of illuminations of English workmanship which show interesting parallels to the tiles are those found in the *Vie de St. Thomas*, handsomely reproduced in photogravure by the Société des Anciens Textes Français. These were probably made about the year 1250.

Another interesting work to be considered in this connection is the exquisitely illuminated *Psautier de St. Louis*, made in France between the years 1252 and 1270. In the discussion of the individual tiles reference will occasionally be made to the series of reproductions of this manuscript edited by H. Omont and published by the Bibliothèque Nationale.

VII

An examination of the round and square tiles portraying scenes of a romantic character makes it evident that there are two distinct series. One series is composed entirely of round tiles, baked in separate quarters, and displaying a circular line around the design. Of these designs two or three depict legendary episodes from the life of Richard I, and the remainder depict miscellaneous scenes of hunt or combat unrelated to any specific story. The other series consists of round or square tiles baked entire, and in the case of the round tiles shows no encircling line. These all are probably connected with the romance of Tristram. A few differences of technique may be detected, I believe, between the two series, though whether they are attributable to the original designer or merely to the cutter of the moulds is a question hardly capable of solution. On the tiles of the former series, the horses

are more skilfully drawn, and the drapery has a flourish as if it were caught by the wind.

VIII

The lettering of the inscriptions which accompany the tiles seems to differ in the two series. The style of letters in both was Lombardic. But those which accompanied the Richard group were larger, and were not attached to the border tiles, as were the smaller. They were, moreover, distinguished by little drops attached to their curves and were therefore of the type called pearl lettering. The inscriptions composed of large letters seem to have been Latin, whereas the smaller letters were made up into French words. From these lettered fragments little of value has been gleaned except the mere discovery of the romance cycles to which they related. Out of the larger letters REX RICARDUS, LEO, and perhaps BACULO have been put together. Among the smaller letters the names TRISTRAM, MORGAN, MARC, MOREHAUT or MORHAUT, and SIRE RO(ALD?) have been detected. The inscriptions "EN LA MER EN UNE" and "SANS GOVERNAIL" probably refer to the solitary voyage of the wounded Tristram to Ireland, Fig. 20. Other guesses might be made, but without much profit. Opposite I give a transliteration of all the inscriptions of more than two letters which I have noted down. It may be well to explain that a question mark indicates that the preceding letter is partly effaced and doubtful, and that a dash signifies a totally effaced letter.

IX

I have already foreshadowed above the conclusions I have come to in regard to the literary sources of these tiles. Dr. Shurlock tells us that having recognized the name of Tristram frequently repeated and also Rex Ricardus he undertook "to read the medieval romances of Richard Coeur de Lion and Sir Tristram."⁵⁷ That he went to the best book in the case of the Richard story cannot be doubted, for although the two or three designs probably went back to earlier and simpler forms of the traditions than those to be found in the romance, yet those traditions are recognizable in the later redaction. In the case of the Tristram story Dr. Shurlock was not so fortunate. As Thomas himself says:

"Entre ceus qui solent cunter
E del cunte Tristran parler
Il en cuntent diversement."

⁵⁷P. 9.

LARGE INSCRIPTIONS

At British Museum:

F(?)IGI C-R MĀG QVB F:AR RICĀ PERIT Cō:P VIRI DERĒ
ACCI MOLS MIA LES +FOR TIS L(?)EO BEL DED DIT TV
BAC GVS REX VLO SEI CAR TVS DET ORJ TEG AVD
SCO RDO Gŷ: OMI QVI: CVS HIC HNS GLI FRĒ PP

SMALL INSCRIPTIONS

At British Museum:

+CI:REPRENT:†S† :ED:LAM-R:EDUDĒ SAUUA6E:ā:LIURĒ
DGLĒ†Rā UR:MADDE:LĒREI(?) PRIĀT:R-L:UĪāGE:Ā CĒT:
IR-TUS:-S AUTS GĒ† ITIS T:I†V LEU:Ē:Ā ODIS OTĒ IRR
Ē:† TV:U DŌZĒ AUT:āP GĒ:PI :SI:LI:Fā CHĒĒ: :LĒO:-M
A(?)RDISE: MARC Ē:DE:SE: :LĒ:MORE S:DENS :DE: MĒH
TEST IRE:KĒ:PUI MADĒ M:Ē:LĒ:M LĒ:FāT OC-IR LAMŌZ
†S†M TAILĒ āBLE Ē†Ē OĒ:LĀ:PLĀ ERĒAD LĒ:† SCE
SIRE:RO MĒHĀUT :†RĒS S†MĀ-U ĪDDS†S† PERITUD GAI
MORĒAD:Ē:SE:GĒ† DE:ED:EDGLĀRE DTI:D(?)IMIDIVOR:D T:SUM
ORA CRU Ē:ĒU ĒULĒ OT :RIĒ: ĒUT RIS D:ED TUTĒ
IDĒ DE:S MILITIS SITO:āN

At South Kensington Museum:

S:GUVDAIL TED:LA:BATAILĒ R(?)PIĀ:LAU RĒ:ALREI †S†ā:
Ē-SA:POL UR:MADDE:LĒ:RĒ SI:UĪXISSE

At Museum of Surrey Archaeological Society, Guildford:

SCĒ:†S†M MŌHĒ AĒUO:QV VOTĒS:P I:ĒĀ:LAU IS:-C

At Little Kimble, Bucks.

GLĒYS:Ē: :SāS:GOVDAIL

At St Ann's Hill, Chertsey:

Ē:†S† ADCH ĒLĒ: TI:EDNĒ

And it was Dr. Shurlock's mischance to have used in his task of identification a wrong form of the "cunte Tristan".

Strange to say, he knew of and seems to have read fragments of the Anglo-Norman poem by Thomas, which was the version used by the designer of the tiles. For Paulin Paris, whom he had consulted in regard to his task of identification, had referred him to the fragments published by Francisque Michel as a possible source for the Chertsey designs, and he himself makes a quotation from them on p. 19. By an odd chance, however, all those fragments belonged to the end of the poem, and nearly all the tiles were concerned with the beginning, and accordingly he did not discover the relationship between them, nor if he had, would the fragments have helped him in the work of identification. So Dr. Shurlock went to Sir Walter Scott's edition of *Sir Tristrem*, a degenerate descendent of Thomas's poem. The result was that at least a third of the plates in his elaborate work are wrongly identified.

Since the time of Paulin Paris the researches of scholars have added a great deal to our knowledge of the Tristram cycle. It has been shown that Thomas wrote about the year 1170, probably in England, certainly for an English audience. In 1878, seven years before the publication of Shurlock's book, Kölbing had declared that the Norse Saga of Tristram was manifestly a translation of Thomas.⁵⁸ When in 1902 M. Bédier re-edited for the Société des Anciens Textes Français the Thomas fragments first published by Michel, he was able to fill in the gaps of the story, partly from the *Tristan* of Gottfried von Strassburg and the English *Sir Tristrem*, but mainly from the Norwegian Saga.

I have gathered from M. Bédier's two volumes the following statements in regard to the Saga and its relation to the poem of Thomas. The Saga "est une imitation directe, en prose norroise, du *Tristan* de Thomas. Elle a été composée en l'an 1226, sur l'ordre du roi de Danemark Haakon V. Le remanieur est ce même frère Robert qui traduisit aussi, pour ce roi grand amateur de romans français, la chanson d'*Élie de Saint-Gilles*."⁵⁹ . . . "Le *Saga* est notre témoin le plus sûr du poème de Thomas."⁶⁰ . . . "Ce que frère Robert conserve de l'original, il le rend mot pour mot, abrégeant à peine, çà et là, le récit."⁶¹ "Il a rejeté nombre d'épisodes, de faits, d'actes des personnages. Mais il a rejeté ou réduit plus volontiers encore précisément ce qui faisait le prix du poème français: ces discours sentimentaux, ces dissertations

⁵⁸E. Kölbing, *Tristansage*, I, p. CXXXV.

⁵⁹Société des Anciens Textes Français, Thomas, *Tristan*, I, Avant Propos, p. 1.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, II, p. 64.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, II, p. 70.

morales chères à Thomas, son émotion, son lyrisme, le jeu maladroit et joli de sa préciosité.⁷⁶²

Now while these features which M. Bédier has just mentioned may be considered what is most precious in the *Tristan* of Thomas, yet their omission by Brother Robert does not embarrass us in the least in determining the subjects of the tiles, on which sentimental discourses and moral dissertations cannot be portrayed. The rejected episodes and abridged descriptions, the number of which I am inclined to think M. Bédier in his reconstruction exaggerates, do, of course, and always will present difficulties to one who essays such a task of identification. It may well be that certain tiles depict details which the Saga has omitted.

There are, as I have already said, at least two, perhaps three tiles which are based upon the romantic traditions which clustered round the name of Richard Coeur de Lion. The historic prowess of that hero furnished as it were a solid trunk around which, like a gorgeous parasite, the fanciful tales of still more marvelous exploits twined themselves. In their earliest literary forms most of these traditions have been lost, but we have references to them in the thirteenth century, and in the fourteenth a number of the most popular episodes were incorporated in the Middle English romance of *Richard Coeur de Lion*. They were worked up with some imaginative elaboration and force of style by a minstrel of southern Lincolnshire, and interpolated by him here and there in the body of a rimed chronicle translated into the Kentish dialect from the Anglo-Norman.⁶³ This composite product is, of course, later than the Chertsey Tiles and therefore could not have been the source of the designs. As I have shown, however, in the *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, XXX, pp. 509 ff., the fabulous parts of the poem include the two stories which in an earlier and simpler form served as the inspiration of these few tiles. We have evidence that one of the stories was current and in high royal favor as early as 1250. For according to the Liberate Rolls of that year, Henry III gave orders to have the history of Antioch and the "duellum Regis Ricardi" painted in his own chamber at the palace of Clarendon. I have already quoted Prof. Lethaby to the effect that this king's predilection for the subject is not without its significance in guessing at the *fons et origo* of this magnificent pavement. Another of these early traditions, which in a simpler form was probably the basis of one of the tiles, is narrated at length in the Middle English romance. We cannot, then, in the case of these Richard designs come as close to the literary version employed by the designer as we can in the case of the

⁶²*Ibid.*, II, p. 75.

⁶³I hope to publish a full statement of my conclusions in regard to this romance in the *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, July, 1916.

Tristram pictures: but since it is at most a matter of identifying only three designs, and these not hard to recognize, there is little to regret.

The remaining tiles have not in my opinion any specific literary source. The heraldic charges, the chevron and the carbuncle, which appear on two of them, do not necessarily have any intentional reference. Many shields of anonymous warriors which are depicted in illuminations were obviously blazoned at the artist's whim. When, moreover, as many as six designs are of one general character and show no distinctive details, it is safe to assume that their lack of specific reference is intentional. It is scarcely necessary to say that such groups of *genre* subjects are common in medieval art. Ivory combs and writing tablets, gemellions and caskets from Limoges frequently display the amusements and the lovemaking of courtly folk without a hint of historical or literary reference. On the wings of a triptych in the Morgan Collection, now on loan at the Metropolitan Museum, New York, are to be seen enameled roundels depicting just such scenes as those we are considering. There are exploits of the chase and a judicial combat, again without sign of literary derivation. Accordingly, while further study may advantageously be applied to the identification of the scenes in the Tristram series, attempts, such as those of Shaw and Shurlock, to connect tiles of this group with historic or legendary persons are bound to be futile.

Dr. Shurlock's draughtsman, a Mr. Lucas, in many cases did not make accurate copies of the tiles. Accordingly wherever the fragments at the British Museum have been sufficient to make possible a reconstruction, Mr. C. O. Waterhouse has executed new and accurate drawings, which have been reproduced in this work. In twenty cases, however, Shurlock's plates have had to be relied on. One figure is reproduced from Shaw's *Specimens of Tile Pavements*.

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Let us now examine each individual tile, as reproduced in the plates, note its features, and try to arrive at an identification. The identification of the designs in the Tristram series will be based, except when otherwise noted, on the Norwegian translation of Thomas's *Tristan*, edited and translated into German by E. Kölbing. The great assistance afforded by M. Bédier's reconstruction of Thomas must not pass unacknowledged.



FIG. 1. AFTER SHURLOCK
 TRIANGRES RECEIVES A MESSENGER (?)





FIG. 2. DEL. WATERHOUSE
TRISTRAM PLAYS CHESS WITH THE NORSEMAN

FIGURE 1

This tile represents two men in long robes, facing each other. The one on the left, who wears a hood, is handing to the other a letter with a seal attached.

I suggest with hesitancy that the incident depicted is that mentioned in ch. XIII of the Saga: "When he (Kanelangres or Rivalen, the father of Tristram) had recovered his health, a messenger came to him from his realm and brought him tidings from his kinsmen and vassals that the Bretons were harrying his land, slaughtering his liegemen, and burning his towns."

Shurlock's suggestion that we identify the scene with one referred to in the romance of Richard Coeur de Lion, where the Bishop of Chester and the Abbot of St. Albans bring sealed letters to the Lion Heart is ruled out by two considerations of weight: the tile does not show the encircling border line characteristic of the Richard series, nor is either of the persons clad in the ecclesiastical garb without which no medieval artist would have portrayed a bishop or abbot.

The design should be compared with a similar design from the *Lives of the Offas*, which Strutt figures in *Horda Angelcynna*, I, pl. XLIV, 1. The figures and costumes show resemblance to those in Lethaby's *Westminster Abbey*, Fig. 25.

FIGURE 2

We see here a boat on the water, and in the boat a youth and a person whose figure is defaced, seated with a chess board between them. In the stern another youth sits, and a fourth person is steering with an oar. A bird is perched on the stern. This tile without question represents Tristram playing chess with the Norse merchants.

While Tristram was under the care of Roald, he obtained leave for himself and his fosterbrothers to go down to the haven, where a merchant from Norway had cast anchor. Roald bought for the boys seven hawks. The story as continued in ch. XVIII of the Saga runs: "Tristram spied there a chess board and asked if any of the merchants would play with him. One declared himself ready, and they fixed the stakes, laying a great sum on the issue. When now his foster-father saw that he sat at the chess board, he said to him, 'My son, I am going home, but thy tutor may wait with thee and accompany thee home when thou art ready.' . . . While he was sitting so absorbed in the game, in all secrecy they drew up cable and anchor and let the ship glide out of the bay."

FIGURE 3

This tile represents a group of figures: the first, kneeling, grasps with one hand a forked stick with two pieces of flesh attached to the prongs, while with the other hand he points back to the second figure, a youth clad in a mantle, with a fillet about his hair, carrying a glove in one hand; behind these, two other figures stand, one of whom is bearded, wears a peaked hat and slavin, has a scrip at his side and a bourdon in his hand. There can be no doubt that the central figure is Tristram, and the scene his presentation to Mark as a stranger who has displayed great skill in venerye. The right hand figure is one of the courtiers holding the "stake-gift". On the left are the two pilgrims.

It will be remembered that Tristram, set ashore by the merchants in an unknown land, meets two pilgrims, and then falls in with some huntsmen. Seeing them set about the dissection of their quarry in a clumsy fashion, he offers to instruct them in the art. Brother Robert, after describing in ch. XXI a part of his operations, goes on to say: "Then Tristram prepared a long branch, and fastened thereon the heart, kidneys, liver, lungs, and haunches. . . . Thereupon he went into the wood and tore off as long a bough as he could, yet such that one might bear it in his hand, and bound to this bough the branch to which he had fixed the best titbits he had taken from the stag, and bound the head on the top and spake to the huntsman, 'For your lord! Take this to him; it is what is called the stake-gift.' . . . Then they set Tristram on a horse, and his pilgrims accompanied him, and he carried on a stake the head of the stag. . . . Tristram and the troop of huntsmen did not cease blowing their horns till they had come before the king himself, and the huntsmen then told the king how Tristram had divided the stag, and how he had served the hounds, and told of the 'stake-gift', and how they should bring the spoils before their lord and king with sound of horns."

For some unknown reason M. Bédier omits from his reconstruction of Thomas the detail that the pilgrims went with Tristram to Mark's court, for which the Saga furnishes authority, as well as the tile.

FIGURE 4

The tile shows a crowned, bearded man reclining on a couch, and a youth seated at the foot, playing a harp. There can be no question that we have here Tristram playing before King Mark.

After Tristram's skill in the art of venerye had won him the introduction at Mark's court depicted in the previous figure, he wins the further favor of the king by his musical attainments. The evening



FIG. 3. DEL. WATERHOUSE
TRISTRAM PRESENTED TO MARK



FIG. 4. DEL. WATERHOUSE
TRISTRAM HARPS BEFORE MARK



FIG. 5. AFTER SHURLOCK
THE PORTER OPENS TO ROALD (?)



FIG. 6. AFTER SHURLOCK
THE LORDS OF ERMENIE DO HOMAGE TO TRISTRAM

after his arrival he recognizes a Breton song that is being played, and is invited by the harper to exhibit what he has learned of the art. The Saga, ch. XXII, continues: "Then Tristram took the harp and sounded all its strings and gave the king and all his folk so sweet a tune that the king like all the other hearers had great esteem thereof. . . . Then said the king to him, 'Worthy friend! . . . thou shalt be in my chamber by night, and soothe me with thy cunning harping, when I lie awake.' "

This design should be compared with an illumination from the *Lives of the Offas*, figured in Strutt's *Horda*, I, pl. LXIII, 1. The figure of Tristram resembles that of a harper in the *Vie de St. Thomas*, published by the Société des Anciens Textes Français, fol. 3r, and that in Lethaby's *Westminster Abbey*, Fig. 24.

FIGURE 5

We have here a battlemented building with a large doorway: one leaf of the door is shown, covered with reinforcements of iron scroll work. In the doorway is a man, with a coif on his head, holding a large key. This is probably the porter of Mark's castle opening to Roald.

The Saga relates that Roald, after Tristram was carried away by the merchants, set out to seek him far and wide, and after many years' wandering learned that he was at the court of Cornwall. Thither he repaired but hesitated to make himself known because of his tattered garments. The Saga, ch. XXIII, tells us that at length "he went to one side to a door, called a porter to him and gave a gift to let him enter. When the porter saw the gift, he opened the door, took him by the hand, and led him further into the hall."

FIGURE 6

This tile, which is considerably defaced, shows a young man, with a shallow, peaked cap tied under his chin, taking between his two hands the joined hands of a kneeling figure; a third man, standing, holds up his joined hands in similar fashion. There can be little doubt that we have here the lords of Ermenie doing homage to Tristram.

When King Mark has learned from Roald that Tristram is his nephew, he makes him his heir and supports his claim to the lordship of Ermenie. On his landing there, Roald summons all of Tristram's vassals. To quote from ch. XXIV: "When the dukes and lords, the vavasours and noble knights appeared, Tristram received their allegiance and caused them to take the oath of loyalty."



FIG. 7. AFTER SHURLOCK
TRISTRAM APPROACHES



DUKE MORGAN (?)

FIG. 8. AFTER SHURLOCK

Shurlock's identification is based on st. CI of *Sir Tristrem*, which has no parallel in the Saga and is therefore lacking in authenticity.

Compare this tile with similar designs in Strutt's *Horda*, I, pl. XXXIX, 2, and XLVI, 2.

FIGURES 7 AND 8

The first of these figures depicts a young man, wearing a peaked coif, and a coat which falls to his knee, girt with a sword, equipped with prick spurs, striding forward with hands raised before him as if counting on his fingers. The second figure depicts a bearded man wearing a peaked pileus, sitting on a heavily cushioned seat, his right hand grasping a sceptre, his left twined in the cord of his mantle. The identification of these figures is doubtful, and there is no necessity for combining them. I suggest that possibly they represent Tristram approaching Duke Morgan, and the resemblance of the man in Fig. 8 to the certainly identified Duke Morgan in Fig. 9 seems to corroborate this view.

With twenty companions Tristram leaves the castle where he had first touched in Ermenie, and rides to claim his paternal domain from the usurper, Duke Morgan. The Saga, ch. XXIV, relates that "when Tristram entered the duke's hall, the whole court rising and listening, he addressed the duke in this wise."

Compare the seated figure with Strutt, *Horda*, pl. LXI and LI. The hat resembles one shown in the *Vie de St. Thomas*, fol. 4r.

FIGURE 9

The design shows a bearded man, clad in a mantle lined with vair, striking with the palm of his hand the face of a young man, who is in the act of drawing his sword. The former resembles the figure in the preceding design in the style of his cap and the twining of his left hand in the cord of his mantle. The identification in this case is certain: the subject is the quarrel between Tristram and Duke Morgan.

When Tristram demands his paternal domains, an angry colloquy takes place in the duke's hall. The Saga continues: "When the Duke heard Tristram's words, to wit, that he called him a liar, he sprang up at Tristram full of wrath and hate, and drove his fist with all his might full in his teeth."



FIG. 9. DEL. WATERHOUSE
TRISTRAM DRAWS UPON DUKE MORGAN



FIG. 10. AFTER SHURLOCK
TRISTRAM KILLS DUKE MORGAN (?)



FIG. 11. DEL. WATERHOUSE
THE BARONS LAMENT FOR THEIR SONS

FIGURE 10

This square tile depicts a knight in mail, without a helm, grasping in his right hand a sword, and with his left seizing the head of a man in flowing robes and a peaked cap, who thrusts out his tongue and spreads his hands abroad in dismay. This, for lack of an apter identification, I suggest is the killing of Morgan by Tristram.

The passage describing the incident follows immediately upon that quoted in connection with the previous tile. "But Tristram straightway drew his sword, and brought it down on his head, and split it down to the eyes, and stretched him dead on the floor in sight of his whole court."

Shurlock's identification of this scene as the butchering of a Saracen to be served up to King Richard as a substitute for pork must be discarded since the tile is not, like the three tiles which are probably connected with Richard, round, baked in four quarters, and encircled by a white border line. Neither is there anything in the victim's costume to distinguish him as a Saracen. On the other hand, against my proposed identification stands the fact that the complete panoply which Tristram here wears does not appear in the previous plate, a marked variation from the usual consistency of costume observed by the designer in consecutive incidents. I can suggest, however, no more probable identification from the *Tristan* of Thomas.

FIGURE 11

The tile shows two adults seated, one with a light beard, the other perhaps a woman: behind them stand three youths, of whom two are wringing their hands: the expressions of all are in the highest degree perturbed. At the feet of the older folk two boys with curly hair are squatted. The subject here represented is the lamentation of the barons of Cornwall at the prospect of separation from their sons.

On Tristram's return to Tintagel after his expedition against Morgan, he finds Mark's court in deep distress over the tribute demanded of them by the king of Ireland. The Saga, ch. XXVI, goes on to say: "Hither had all the noble ladies come with their sons, and those who were to be delivered up as truage to Ireland were about to be chosen by lot. . . . It is a sore affliction and grievous to think on that children of so high lineage should be given over to such bondage and thralldom. 'Lord God, long suffering art thou to let such things be; have pity on this heavy woe.' Noble men shed tears, women moaned and wailed, children screamed."

Compare the hands of the children in this design with those shown in Strutt's *Horda*, I, pl. XLV, 2.

FIGURE 12

This badly mutilated tile shows a group of figures kneeling, with hands upraised in supplication. Three seem to be adults, and two to be boys. There can be little doubt that we have here the barons of Cornwall and their sons imploring the drawers of lots to have mercy on them.

On Tristram's return to Tintagel after his expedition against Morgan, he finds Mark's court in deep distress over the tribute of boys demanded of them by the King of Ireland. Brother Robert says in ch. XXVI, "He (Tristram) walked into the hall and the castle, and as he had been sad before, now was he still more woeful, for he found the noblest men to be found in the kingdom, and they all were on their knees before those who were about to draw the lots and each prayed God to have mercy on him and save him from an unlucky lot."

FIGURE 13

Here a crowned, bearded man is shown, holding a youth by the chin, and bending forward as if about to kiss him. I prefer to see in this tile Mark kissing Tristram after he has accepted the challenge of Morhaut.

When Tristram learns the cause of the misery he witnesses, he offers himself as champion of the rights of Cornwall to meet the Irish ambassador, Morhaut, in single combat, staking the tribute on the issue. Ch. XXVII of the Saga then begins thus: "Then spake the king, 'Gramercy, my dear nephew. Come hither and embrace me. If thou winnest back for us our freedom, thou shalt be heir to all my kingdom: no man is worthier than thou to receive it, for thou art the son of my sister's husband.'"

There can be little doubt that this and the following tile illustrate different moments in the same scene. Shurlock referred them both to the occasion when Mark learned from Roald of Tristram's close kinship, which is described in stanza LXVII of *Sir Tristrem* and ch. XXIV of the Saga. The latter and more authentic account mentions Mark alone as kissing and embracing Tristram. Figure 14, therefore, cannot be an illustration of this earlier scene, but must refer to the later scene when Tristram undertakes to uphold the rights of Cornwall. Since it implies the existence of a tile depicting the moment immediately preceding it, that is, Mark's embracing the hero, and since Figure 13 fills this requirement, I have arrived at the identification already stated.

Compare this design with that shown in Strutt's *Horda*, I, pl. XXXIX, 2.



FIG. 12. DEL. WATERHOUSE
THE BARONS IMPLORE MERCY



FIG. 13. DEL. WATERHOUSE
MARK KISSES TRISTRAM



FIG. 14. AFTER SHURLOCK
THE BARONS EMBRACE TRISTRAM



FIG. 15. DEL. WATERHOUSE
MORHAUT WOUNDS TRISTRAM

FIGURE 14

This design is by no means complete. A youth embraces a person, whether man or woman I cannot say, who holds him by the chin as if about to kiss him. The head of another adult in a coif and the eyes of two other persons, presumably adults, are to be seen. To the left are the heads of three boys, distinguished as usual by their curly hair. The presence of the boys determines the identification of this scene as the barons and their sons expressing their gratitude to Tristram.

The Saga, ch. XXVII, immediately after giving the words of Mark cited above, continues: "Then Tristram stepped forth and kissed the king, his uncle, and all the vassals and knights who were there . . . and thereupon all, old and young, thanked him, and said that if he might vanquish their enemy and win back their freedom, they would all love and honor him as their lord, and serve him, since he was willing to be their protector."

FIGURE 15

This represents a combat between two knights clad in chain mail, one bearing on his shield a lion rampant. They appear to be riding at each other, the knight on the left driving his blade into the thigh of the other. The scene is, of course, the combat between Morhaut and Tristram, when the hero is wounded in the thigh.

Brother Robert, after a description of the arming of the knights, which does not tally in detail with the armor which is here depicted, recounts in ch. XXVIII the progress of the battle. After they had broken their spears in the first shock, "they drew their swords and laid mighty blows upon each other so that the sparks flew from their helms, swords, and hauberks. . . . But Morhaut smote Tristram in a place which he left unprotected, for he held the shield far away from him, and the sword struck him in the left side, and the hauberk did not ward off the stroke, and he narrowly escaped being slain by Morhaut."

The lion on Tristram's shield raises an interesting question. M. Bédier on p. 61 of his reconstruction assigns to the hero as his cognizance a boar. He justifies this assignment by Gottfried's description of Tristram's shield and by the fact that in the Saga, ch. LI, Mariadoc has a dream of a boar, which is interpreted as Tristram. M. J. Loth, in the *Revue Celtique*, 1911, p. 297, without direct reference to Thomas, asserts that Gottfried did not invent the boar as an emblem for Tristram, but found it supplied by a lost French source. Unless the somewhat doubtful evidence of M. Bédier just cited be considered, M. Loth's hypothesis seems to be quite without foundation, and his interesting remarks on the boar as a Celtic cognizance are not relevant to our discus-

sion. It is strange that M. Bédier should have given so little weight to a piece of evidence which he quotes himself on the very page where he makes Tristram's emblem a boar. It is a passage from the Saga to the effect that Mark presented Tristram with a destrier covered with a red housing, on which the figures of lions were worked in gold thread. Now while we do not know that at the time when Thomas wrote knights were accustomed to deck their horse furniture with armorial emblems, such as at that period were just being defined, yet there is a strong suggestion in this passage that Tristram's arms were, in the phraseology of a later heraldry, *gules a lion or*. Besides the corroborative testimony of the Chertsey Tiles, we have the evidence of *Sir Tristrem*, which in describing the combat says that Morhaut "smot him in the lyoun, And Tristrem that was wight, Bar him thurch the dragoun in the scheld." Before the force of these three witnesses, the single authority of Gottfried, never of the highest evidential value, must give way.

Prof. Lethaby has kindly communicated to me the excellent suggestion that Thomas by assigning to his hero this coat, *gules a lion or*, was approaching closely that of the royal house of England. When exactly the royal arms were defined we do not know, but the earliest of the royal seals to show them on the shield carried by the monarch is the first seal of Richard the Lion Heart, probably made in the opening year of his reign, 1189. Since the shield is there represented in profile, only one lion appears, but the fact that he faces to the right and the written testimony of Ambroise establish a strong probability that the first known royal shield of England bore two gold lions facing each other, or to use a technical term, *counter-rampant*.⁶⁴ It is not at all unlikely, then, that Thomas in assigning to his hero as an emblem the gold lion on a red ground intended a piece of flattery to the house of Plantagenet.

The attribution of the lion shield to Tristram seems to have continued through the centuries, for a list of King Arthur's knights in an edition of *Gyron le Courtois*, printed at Paris in 1500, reads, "Messire tristan de leonnois portoit de sinople a ung lyon dor arme et langue de gueulles." The *Tavola Ritonda*, however, expressly contradicts this. "E infra le dette insegne lo re fa porre un ricco pennone alle insegne di messer Tristano; cioe il campo azzurro, con una banda d'argento, con uno fregetto d'oro da ogni lato della banda. Ed alcuno vuole dire che Tristano porto per insegna il campo azurro con un leone ad oro; ma piu manifesta e questa di prima, che fosse la sua diritta arme."⁶⁵ King René in the *Livre du Cuer d'Amours Espris* describes Tristram's shield

⁶⁴F. P. Barnard, *Companion to English History*, p. 123.

⁶⁵Fd. F. L. Polidori, p. 513.



FIG. 16. AFTER SHURLOCK
TRISTRAM KILLS MORHAUT



FIG. 17. DEL. WATERHOUSE
MORHAUT IS CARRIED FROM THE FIELD



FIG. 18. AFTER SHURLOCK
GORMON HASTENS TO VIEW MORHAUT'S BODY (?)

still otherwise, "d'or a une bande de pourpre."⁶⁶ It is possible that like Thomas these other authors ascribed to Tristram certain family arms of their own day. Certainly this was the case with the Sicilian coverlets mentioned on p. 10, where Tristram carries on his shield the three horns of the Guicciardini.

FIGURE 16

Here the same two knights that are depicted in the previous tile appear again. The knight with the lion shield has now driven his sword deep into the helm of his enemy, who leans limply forward, his sword-arm dropping to his side. This tile illustrates, of course, the fatal blow which Tristan gives Morhaut.

Of this the Saga, ch. XXVIII, gives the following account. "All (the spectators) were sore grieved and distressed in mind, men as well as women, when they saw his (Tristram's) steed all bebled, and prayed God to deliver him from pain and peril. Tristram heard their words and noted likewise that Morhaut was about to attack him; and he swung his sword with all his might, and smote down on the top of his helm. The iron gave way, the steel offered no defense, the mail cap availed not, and the sword cut away his hair and beard and lay lodged in his skull and brains."

FIGURE 17

The tile shows two figures wearing coifs, bearing away the body of a knight clad in helm and mail. This is without doubt Morhaut's corpse carried from the scene of combat.

Brother Robert in ch. XXVIII recounts the episode briefly: "Then Tristram bade the messenger bear his (Morhaut's) body to Ireland, and moreover to say that they should get no tribute from England, neither gold nor silver, other than this offering. Then the men of Ireland took his body and bore it with great sorrow down the shore to his tent."

FIGURE 18

Here we have a single figure, bearded, wearing a crown, and, to judge by his expression, much agitated. He is running, raising his right hand, and with his left gathering up his robe. The subject is doubtful, but may be Gormon's distress on the arrival of Morhaut's body.

⁶⁶Ed. Quatrebarbe, p. 114.

The Saga relates in ch. XXIX that after the vessel touched at Dublin, "the messengers took up the corpse and bore it up to the castle, and all the vassals ran to meet them in order to see the dead knight When the king saw the dead Morhaut, he sighed from the bottom of his heart and was overcome with horror."

FIGURE 19

A youth is here depicted lying on a bed, raising his hands in supplication to a crowned personage sitting at the foot of the bed, who gesticulates with one hand, while with the other he holds the hem of his robe to his nose. Behind the sick man's head is a cushion. This tile is clearly a representation of Mark's visit to Tristram, when the youth is suffering from the wound dealt by Morhaut's poisoned sword.

The scene is described in ch. XXX of the Saga. "Then the wound gave Tristram such great torment that he would rather have been dead than live in such great agony. Never did he enjoy quiet or sleep, for the poison had entered his bones and flesh, and his kinsmen and friends were loth to sit by him because of the stench that went forth from him. Then Tristram spake to the king: 'Lord, I pray thee of thy good favor, give me some solace in my wretched life. . . . None of my kinsfolk or friends will come to me longer, to visit or comfort me, and therefore I desire to journey hence, whithersoever God may suffer me to go according to His divine grace and my need.' "

FIGURE 20

The tile depicts a man lying propped up in a boat on the water, with coverings over head and body, plucking with his hands the strings of a harp. There can be no question that this represents Tristram adrift in the rudderless boat, solacing himself with his harp.

The situation occurs when, in fulfilment of the wish expressed on his sickbed, Tristram is set out in a boat off the coast of Cornwall, taking his harp to give him relief in his suffering. The Saga in giving an account of the voyage says in ch. XXX: "Now they were driven about on the sea by storm and billows so long that they did not know where they were: at last, however, they reached Ireland." Since, however, the Saga mentions no companions before the voyage or during the visit in Ireland or on the return, it is likely that the vague "they" referred to is a mistranslation of some impersonal construction. This view is

⁶⁷Thomas, *Tristan*, I, p. 145, note.



FIG. 19. DEL. WATERHOUSE
MARK VISITS THE WOUNDED TRISTRAM



FIG. 20. DEL. WATERHOUSE
TRISTRAM DRIFTS IN THE RUDDERLESS BOAT



FIG. 21. AFTER SHURLOCK
TRISTRAM TEACHES ISOLT TO HARP

confirmed by the testimony of the Oxford *Folie Tristan*, according to M. Bédier, a reliable index to the original version of Thomas.⁶⁷ The *Folie* attributes to Tristram these words describing the voyage:

“En mer me mis, la voil murir,
Tant par m'ennuat le languir.” ll. 343 f.
“Od ma harpe me delitoie
Je n'oi confort, ke tant amoie.” ll. 353 f.

Furthermore, the inscription, SANS GOVERNAIL, may well have been taken directly from Thomas. As against the testimony of the *Folie Tristan* and the Chertsey Tiles the confused version of the *Saga*, the obviously elaborated version of Gottfried, and the version of the garbled *Sir Tristrem* cannot stand. I, therefore, believe M. Bédier mistaken in adopting the version of *Sir Tristrem* and giving Tristram Governal as a companion on the voyage.

FIGURE 21

This tile shows us a man, wearing a cap with a curious horn-like projection, who is handing over a harp to a lady seated near him. This, I believe, represents Tristram teaching Isolt to play the harp.

After Tristram's wound has been healed by the ministrations of the Queen of Ireland, the hero undertakes in return to instruct her daughter Isolt. In ch. XXX of the *Saga* we find these few lines devoted to the subject: “Then Trantris (the name Tristram had assumed in the country of his mortal foes) gave himself up with all assiduity, night and day to teaching Isolt to play the harp and all other stringed instruments, to write and compose letters, and to be cunning in all other possible arts.”

Dr. Shurlock on p. 25 of his book explains this tile as follows: “Tristram disguises himself as a court fool, feigns madness, and having obtained an interview with Ysonde, reveals himself by singing songs he had taught her.” There is no scene in Thomas where Tristram disguises himself as a court fool and gaining access to the queen plays the harp to her. In the one poem in which Tristram makes himself known to her as a minstrel, his instrument is a vielle.⁶⁸

Compare the figures in Strutt's *Horda*, pl. XXVI, 1.

⁶⁷Thomas, *Tristan*, I, p. 145, note.

⁶⁸*Tristan Ménestrel*, *Romania*, XXXV, p. 497.



FIG. 22. DEL. WATERHOUSE
TRISTRAM RIDES UP TO TINTAGEL (?)



FIG. 23. AFTER SHURLOCK
TRISTRAM ENCOUNTERS



THE DRAGON

FIG. 24. AFTER SHURLOCK



FIG. 25. RECONSTRUCTED FROM SHURLOCK
TRISTRAM OFFERS HIS



FIG. 26. AFTER SHURLOCK

GAGE TO GORMON

FIGURE 22

The tile depicts a company of young men riding, two of them wearing hoods. The romance naturally contains many accounts of knights riding to and fro, and I can merely hazard a guess at the particular account here illustrated. Perhaps Tristram's ride up to Tintagel after his return to Ireland is as probable as any.

The event is described in ch. XXXII of the Saga: "He now left the ship, and they led before him a great strong destrier: he mounted it and rode home to the castle."

Shurlock's identification of the tile as "Knights bringing Tristram and Ysonde to court from the forest" must be discarded, first, because we have no reason to believe that Thomas even mentions the actual return and second, because I cannot detect among the riders one apparelled like a woman. The inscription which Shurlock attaches to this plate (No. 36) consists of two parts, which should not be joined in this misleading way and translated as "Morgan and his attendants return to England." There are two subjects while the verb *turne* is singular: and further, Morgan is never mentioned as going to England.

FIGURES 23 AND 24

The first of what is probably a pair of tiles represents an armed knight riding with spear in feutre. The second tile, which came from Halesowen, is in great part effaced, but enough remains to show a large, swollen, worm-like beast with two clawed feet appearing, and with two heads, which threaten with open jaws some approaching enemy. These tiles probably illustrate Tristram's encounter with the dragon.

According to the Saga, when Tristram arrived in Dublin to seek the hand of Isolt on behalf of his uncle Mark, he found the city so terrorized by a dragon that the King of Ireland had promised his daughter in marriage to the destroyer of the monster, whoever he might be. Tristram secretly prepared for the adventure, and when he heard the alarm, sallied forth to battle. To quote from ch. XXXVI of the Saga: "He looked now before him, and saw how the dragon came stalking, with head lifted high, with bulging eyes and protruding tongue, and how he vomited on all sides venom and fire, so that he destroyed with his fire every living thing that came near him. As soon as the dragon descried Tristram, he roared and puffed himself up. But Tristram gathered all his courage that he might prove his hardihood, gave his destrier the spurs, held his shield before him and thrust the spear down its mouth with such terrible force and fury that all the teeth of the dragon which the lance met flew wide from his head: the iron pierced at once through his heart and ran out at his belly, so that Tristram lodged a piece of the shaft in the body and neck of the beast."

FIGURES 25 AND 26

The first tile is a reconstruction from Shurlock's pl. 3 and a fragment at the British Museum. It depicts a young man, girt with a sword, who has one hand at his hip and with the other holds up a glove. The second tile shows a crowned personage, holding a sceptre in the left hand and seeming to take a glove with his right. I incline to the belief that we have here Tristram offering his gage to Gormon as undertaking to prove the falsehood of the steward.

There are two occasions, however, on which Tristram undertook the wager by battle by giving up his glove to a king. The first is that when Morhaut came to Cornwall to demand the tribute of King Mark, and Tristram offered to dispute the claim. Ch. XXVII begins, "Then the king spake, 'Gramercy, my dear nephew: come hither and embrace me.' . . . Then Tristram stepped forward and kissed the king, his uncle, and all the vassals and knights who were there. Tristram handed over to the king his glove in order to pledge himself thereby to the single combat with Morhaut."

The other occasion that this tile may depict takes place after the slaying of the dragon. The steward of the Irish king claims the exploit and in consequence the princess for himself, and when Tristram rises and disputes the claim, challenges him to combat. Tristram rises and accepts the challenge. At this point I quote from the Saga, ch. XLII: "Then spake the king, 'Fix the combat between you by clasp of hand, and give us pledges and sureties that what is now agreed on shall be observed.' Then Tristram handed over to the king his glove as pledge." My choice as between these two possible scenes is founded solely on the expression of the king's face, which as it is one of surprise rather than of pleasure, seems more appropriate to the latter scene.

Shurlock's identification of 25 as Roald is disproved by the youthfulness of the man. Furthermore, there is no mention of a glove when Roald is admitted to Tintagel castle.

A fragment of Tile 26 (at the British Museum) is unique in bearing an inscription on its face. It shows the upper left hand corner, with the uplifted hand and glove. In the first line we have :G:, in the second ANNO, in the third the upper half of the following :OR (or P) IE. I have been unable to make anything of this: a discovery of the remaining fragments of this unique tile might determine the date and other important facts in regard to the tiles.

The king's figure should be compared with those shown in Strutt's *Horda*, I, pl. LVII, 2, in the *Vie de St. Thomas*, fol. 4r, and in Lethaby's *Westminster Abbey*, Fig. 22.

FIGURE 27

The half-tile here illustrated shows a young man, with a fillet round his hair, holding out in his right hand a covered goblet or hanap. This is, of course, Tristram presenting the love philtre to Isolt. The inscription, which is here reproduced from Shurlock's plate, does not relate to the tile.

After Tristram has established his claim to Isolt, he announces that he has come to secure her as the bride of Mark, and sets sail with her for Cornwall. Bringvain, her maid, has been entrusted with a love potion which is to be given the royal bride and groom the night of their wedding. The Saga, ch. XLVI, relates: "Now Tristram sailed on and the weather was fair, and because the heat was sore he thirsted exceedingly and longed to drink some wine. At once a page sprang and filled a vessel from the keg which had been given into Bringvain's care. When Tristram had taken the vessel, he drank half of it and let the lady drink the rest which was still in the cup: and now are they both possessed by the potion which they have drunk."

Shurlock takes this figure to be Bringvain. Against this must be set the fact that the Saga and the version of the Oxford *Folie Tristan* ascribe to Bringvain no part in the tragic blunder and the additional fact that the hair is like that of Tristram in Figures 3 and 19.

FIGURE 28

This figure shows a person clad in a coif and a tunic that comes down to his knee, ascending a ladder into a ship; and in the ship a woman, her head covered with a hood and hat, who raises her finger at the man. I believe that the moment here depicted is that when Isolt, on her way to the trial by red hot iron, signals Tristram to carry her ashore.

Brother Robert relates that after her marriage Isolt, being suspected of infidelity, was adjudged to endure the trial by red hot iron. He continues in ch. LVIII: "When, now, the fixed day drew nigh, Isolt bethought herself of a subterfuge and sent word to Tristram that on the day appointed him he should meet her at a shallow in the river, after rendering himself as unrecognizable as he might. When she must needs be set across the water, she would cause him to carry her from the boat, and then she would impart a secret to him. So he diligently ordered it that on the day named he should be near her, so wholly disguised that no one should perceive who he was. His face was smeared over and over with yellow color, and he was clad in a shabby woolen coat, over which an old mantle was drawn. Then the queen on the other



FIG. 27. AFTER SHURLOCK
TRISTRAM PRESENTS THE POTION TO ISOLT



FIG. 28. AFTER SHURLOCK
ISOLT SIGNALS TO TRISTRAM

side of the stream entered the boat; forthwith she made Tristram a sign ere the boat brought her to land. Then she cried to Tristram with a loud voice: 'Friend, come hither and carry me from the boat. Thou art likely to be a stout mariner.' Right so, Tristram came to the boat and took her in his arms."

There are two objections to this identification. The first is that the description of costume given and the fact that a few lines after the quoted passage Isolt says of the disguised Tristram that he is a pilgrim do not harmonize with the costume depicted on the tile. Furthermore, Prof. Lethaby objects in a private communication that "the figure approaching seems delicately girlish and not fit to carry off the fat lady." The first objection is, in my opinion, of little weight since a comparison of Figure 15 with ch. XXVIII of the Saga shows that the tile designer did not aim at a careful reproduction of the details of costume afforded by Thomas. Prof. Lethaby's objection seems to me not adequately borne out by the features of the design itself. The figure ascending the ladder does not appear particularly girlish, and the costume rules out the possibility of its being a female. At least, I have yet to come across the portrayal of a thirteenth century woman of station wearing a coif or a short-cut tunic. Both the headgear and the dress are distinctively masculine. As for the figure in the boat, it seems to me hazardous to estimate the *avoirduois* of a person in so full a hood and cloak. The supposition that it represents Isolt in heavy traveling apparel is surely not absurd.

In his article for the Walpole Society volume, Prof. Lethaby offers an alternative identification of the tile. He says, "It is certainly Iselt embarking to go to the assistance of Tristram. The second figure is Brangwin." In a private communication he writes, "As to the identifications the best point of departure is 16 together with 26." (Shurlock's numbering: 28 and 29 in the present work.) "It seems to me certain as anything in the language of art can be that the two people in 16 (28) are the same as the two middle people in 26 (29). . . . Taking 16 and 26 together, these two persons can only be explained as Iselt and Brangwin." I have already put forward reason for not accepting the figure ascending the ladder as Isolt. Furthermore, it seems to me that the objection which Prof. Lethaby has brought against accepting the person in the boat as Isolt tells equally against Brangwin. For if the person be plump, she cannot be Brangwin, who passed herself off in the bridal bed of Mark as the young queen.

Is it possible, however, relabeling the male figure Kaherdin and the female figure Isolt, still to refer the tile to the scene of embarkation for Brittany? Apart from the fact that the embarkation is of slight importance and cursorily recounted by Thomas,⁶⁹ there are two objections of

⁶⁹ll. 2787 ff.

weight. One is the fact that Bringvain, as essential a figure as Kaherdin, is omitted. The other is Thomas's statement that the party embarked into a little boat by a postern in the wall above the Thames, a proceeding which would not require the ladder. Accordingly, I adhere to my original identification.

FIGURE 29

This tile represents a boat with sail hoisted on the water, and a man with an oar rowing in the bow. Three other persons sit in the boat: one, wearing a round, narrow-brimmed hat with a tassel, sits in the stern; another wearing a coif sits opposite the first and gesticulates; and the third, clad much as Isolt is clad in the preceding figure, faces the rower and gesticulates. Prof. Lethaby's patient reasonings have convinced me that this can represent but one voyage, and that, Isolt's voyage to see the dying Tristram.

The particular occasion would be that described in Thomas's *Tristan*, II, 2971-3005, which I here translate: "Then the wind fell and the weather grew fair; they have hoisted the white sail, and sail with great speed till Kaherdin espies Brittany. Then are they joyful and glad and draw the sail full high so that afar one might descry whether it were white or black . . . While they were sailing merrily, the heat arose and the wind fell until they could not sail. Full still and smooth is the sea. The ship moves nor hither nor thither save as the waves draw it, and they have no longer their boat: now is there great distress . . . Up and down they drift, now back, now forward . . . Isolt is thereby greatly tormented: she sees the land she has coveted, and yet she may not win to it: never a whit does her desire abate. Often Isolt calls herself wretched. They yearn that the ship may touch the shore, yet they no longer see it."

That the oarsman is in the bow is proved by the direction in which the points of the oarholes are cut. A comparison with the last plate of the *Vie de St. Thomas* and Strutt's *Horda*, I, pl. LXIV, 2, indicates that these points are always directed toward the stern. The figure facing the oarsman is, I believe, after comparison with the preceding tile, Isolt. She is perhaps urging the man at the oar to row them to the land, which is so tantalizingly near. The next figure is distinguished by his coif as a man, and therefore can be no other than Kaherdin. The person in the stern is therefore Bringvain, as young and almost as fair, be it remembered, as Isolt herself.

Shurlock speaks of Isolt in this scene as disguised as a man, but the basis for this error is a passage invented by Sir Walter Scott as a conclusion to his edition of *Sir Tristrem*. Thomas himself mentions nothing of the kind.



FIG. 29. DEL. WATERHOUSE
ISOLT VOYAGES TO SEE TRISTRAM



FIG. 30. AFTER SHURLOCK
THE DIRGE IS SUNG OVER TRISTRAM



FIG. 31



FIG. 32

DEL. WATERHOUSE

FIG. 31. TRISTRAM LEARNS THE PRACTISE OF ARCHERY (?)

FIG. 32. A HUNTSMAN BLOWS HIS HORN (?)

FIGURE 30

The tile represents a funeral bier covered with hangings. Two candles stand at the head and two at the feet of the dead. Two priests are chanting the dirge: one has a lectern before him and a book, in which are the words DIRIGE DOMINE; the other holds a book, in which the letters CC appear. To Prof. Lethaby I am again indebted for leading me to identify this with the dirge sung over Tristram's bier.

Tristram, hearing from his wife, Isolt of the White Hands, the lie that the approaching ship bears a black sail, and convinced thereby that Isolt of Ireland no longer loves him, dies. Thomas in ll. 3046 f. says, "Knights and sergeants pass forth and bear the body from its bed, then lay it down on a cloth of samite, and cover it with a pall of ray."

FIGURE 31

This fragment at the British Museum depicts two boys (always distinguishable on these tiles by their curly hair) and the hand of a third figure. The boy on the right is gesticulating as if to a fourth person. The boy on the left has his arms crossed, holding in his right hand a bow, and in the other an arrow. This I identify as Tristram and his foster brothers learning the practice of archery.

It will be remembered that after the death of Kanelangres (Rivalen) his marshal, Roald, protected and brought up as his own son the young Tristram. Though no direct mention is made in chap. XVII of the Saga of instruction in archery, yet it seems to me not unlikely that Brother Thomas is here condensing, and in this impression M. Bédier concurs.⁷⁰

Compare this detail with Lethaby's *Westminster Abbey*, Fig. 20.

FIGURE 32

This fragment, also at the British Museum, is from a square tile and shows the usual pilaster ornament at the side. On it appears about three quarters of the figure of a man, his head covered with a coif, his left hand raising to his mouth a horn, which is attached to a cord about his neck. Near his head the cap of another figure is visible. That we have here one of the huntsmen whom Tristram met after being set ashore by the merchants seems probable, but just what point in the adventure is intended there seems no way of determining.

In the Saga there is no mention of horn blowing till in ch. XXII the troop of huntsmen on horseback approach Mark's palace. Since the

⁷⁰Thomas, *Tristan*, I, p. 29, note.

figure on the tile is not mounted, the scene depicted must be an earlier one. M. Bédier in a note on p. 47 records his impression that the Scandinavian translator found the technical terms and details of venerye wearisome, and abbreviated freely throughout this passage, and since Gottfried describes the huntsmen as blowing their horns at once on the death of the stag, it is quite possible that Thomas may have done so as well, and that this fragment of a tile preserves a record of that detail.

FIGURE 33

The fragment at the British Museum shows parts of the figures of three men in long robes. One wears a belt, and the hilt of a sword appears at his thigh. Another wears a coif and bears a mace. This last feature has suggested to me that these figures may be the ambassadors of the King of Ireland before Mark.

Although no direct mention is made in chap. XXVII of the Saga of any ambassadors before Mark besides Morhaut, yet scenes XI and XII on the Sicilian coverlet at South Kensington show Morhaut himself holding the official mace of an ambassador, before he was sent in that capacity to Cornwall.⁷¹ Since the lost Italian version on which the coverlet is based could not have followed Thomas closely at this point, we can not regard it as furnishing more than a starting point for guesswork, and I can claim only conjectural value for my identification of this fragment.

FIGURE 34

This fragment at the British Museum shows us a boat with a bit of its mast and a bit of the clothing of an occupant; and to the right a young man, wading away from the boat, gathering up his robe with one hand and with the other holding forth a glove. If this figure is Tristram, as seems not unlikely, I know of no landing of his which corresponds better to the illustration than that on his return to Cornwall with a bride for King Mark.

The Saga mentions the incident in ch. XLVI: "None the less they sailed toward the land, and landed in a good haven Then the king rode down to the strand."

We have now finished our examination of the tiles and fragments belonging to the Tristram series. We now pass on to those which are distinguished from the Tristram series by peculiarities of manufacture, namely the baking in quarters and the encircling white line. The first three I take to illustrate two of the best known legends concerning

⁷¹*Romania*, 1913, pl. facing p. 519 and p. 537.



FIG. 33. DEL. WATERHOUSE
AMBASSADORS APPEAR BEFORE MARK (?)



FIG. 34. DEL. WATERHOUSE
TRISTRAM LANDS IN CORNWALL (?)



FIG. 35. AFTER SHURLOCK
RICHARD TEARS OUT THE LION'S HEART

Richard Coeur de Lion, which, as I have already set forth, were incorporated in the early part of the fourteenth century in the Middle English romance of Richard. In what precise form they were known to the tile designer we are ignorant.

FIGURE 35

On this tile we have depicted a youth, with a circlet round his hair and a dagger at his waist, sitting astride a lion, whose jaws he is rending open. The subject I take to be Richard tearing the heart from the lion. The encircling white line which I know to have surrounded this design was omitted by Shurlock's artist.

The episode as it is recounted in the Middle English romance probably differs considerably from that used by the designer; still to it as our only source we must have recourse. The minstrel of southern Lincolnshire whom we know to have been responsible for these fabulous parts as they stand in the romance, by an odd anachronism places Richard's imprisonment by the "king of Almayn" before the Crusade. Richard strives while in durance to break the head of the king's son, who has challenged him to an exchange of buffets, and to lie with the king's infatuated daughter. The king, to relieve himself of the responsibility of shedding royal blood, lets a starved lion into Richard's cell. But Richard's ladylove forewarns him, and he takes measures to meet the situation. According to the *b* version, he asks her,

"Do me haue kerchyues of selke,
Ffourty, whyte as any mylk,
And a scharpe Irissh knyf,
As thow wolde saf my lyf."

MS. A, ll. 1035-1036/2, p. 134.

Richard prepares himself by wrapping one arm up in the forty handkerchiefs and putting the knife ready to his other hand.

"The chambre dore they hadde vndo,
And the lyon ladde him too.
When the lyon sey him skete,
He ramped on with his fete,
He yoned wyde and ganne to rage,
As wilde best that was sauage.
And kyng Ric. also sket
Jn the lyones throte his arme he shete,
All in kerchese his arme was wonde,
The lyon he stranged in that stonde."

MS. A, ll. 1057/21-30, pp. 137 f.

It must be recognized that there is but little coincidence of detail between the romance and the tile design. One might properly ask, "Why cannot we accept the figures as representing the familiar struggle, called by medievals 'Samson Fortin', where Samson is depicted straddling the lion and rending open its jaws in just this way?" I reply that among these tiles there is none representing a Scriptural subject, whereas we have at least one subject certainly derived from the Richard tradition. We know furthermore that the Coeur de Lion episode was sufficiently popular by 1300 to be painted in the Peterborough Psalter.⁷² Finally, even though the dagger here be not exactly the Irish knife mentioned, there is a good possibility of its corresponding to some edged tool in a variant of the story, but it has no place whatever in an illustration of Samson's struggle. As between "Samson Fortin" and Richard and the lion heart the latter seems to be more probable.

The figure may be compared with that of Samson in the *Psautier de St. Louis*, pl. LVI. There is a striking resemblance between Richard's costume, including the fillet and the dagger, and that of a figure in the *Vie de St. Thomas*, fol. 3v.

FIGURES 36 AND 37

The first of these figures shows a knight in mail, wearing a crowned helm and bearing a shield on which the heads of three heraldic lions appear. He rides a gallop, and rests his lance on his horse's head between the ears. The second figure, of which one of the quarters is lost, depicts a man with a short beard, wearing a tasseled cap and tunic but no armor, borne back in his saddle by a spear, the head of which appears at his back. His left hand clasps a sword with slightly curved blade. His steed is falling forward on its knees; the saddle has slipped sideways, and the rider's foot has lost the stirrup. These figures, without doubt, depict Richard's overthrow of Saladin in single combat.

The passage in the Middle English romance of *Richard Coeur de Lion* which gives an elaborate version of the encounter extends from l. 3481 to 5797.⁷³ Saladin, the chief Sowdan of heatheness, sends a challenge to Richard to meet him in single combat to determine which is of more power, Jesus or Juppiter. He sends him also the offer of a mount for the combat. Richard accepts both the challenge and the offer. Saladin then bids a necromancer conjure two fiends into the shape of a mare and her colt. The latter, which becomes uncontrollable when its mother neighs, and kneels beside her for suck, he despatches

⁷²*Publications of the Mod. Lang. Assoc.*, XXX, p. 520.

⁷³References throughout are to *Richard Löwenhercz*, ed. K. Brunner, *Wiener Beiträge zur Englischen Philologie*, vol. XLII.

to Richard, and keeps the dam as his own mount. Richard, however, is warned of the intended treachery by an angel, who instructs him to procure a tree forty feet long and to truss it overthwart the colt's mane. He further bids Richard bridle the beast, and gives him a spear-head of steel warranted to pierce the stoutest armor. Richard exceeds the angel in caution. Not only does he bridle the colt, but he rigs the tree across his saddle bow and carefully fastens it with iron chains, stuffs the colt's ears with wax to prevent its hearing its mother's neighing, and finally conjures it in the seven names of God to serve him at his will. By way of further preparation, he hangs a mace and an ax before his saddle, takes a shield of steel "With three lupardes wrought fful weel," and clothes himself in plate and a helm crested with the dove of the Holy Spirit, perched upon a crucifix. After arranging the terms of the combat, Richard leaps into his saddle and to the noise of trumps and tabors, bears down upon the Sowdan. The latter, expecting Richard's steed to betray him, carries only a falchion and a shield blazoned with a "serpent." But the colt cannot hear its mother's neighing, and carries Richard furiously toward the encounter. At the shock Saladin's bridle and poitreil, girth and stirrups give way. The mare sinks to the ground, and the Sowdan is shot

"Bakward ouyr his meres croupe,
His feet toward the ffymamente.
Behynde hym the spere out wente."

It will be observed that many details of Richard's equipment are not depicted in the tile design, and this fact probably points to a less elaborate account as the basis for the design. Particularly interesting is the fact that the mere placing of the spear between the colt's ears shown in the tile may represent the first simple form of the story out of which grew, first, the angel's instruction to truss the tree overthwart the colt's mane, and then, the complex arrangements for bracing and chaining the tree on the iron saddle-bow.

Furthermore, as I have observed in the *Publications of the Modern Language Associations*, XXX, p. 515, this simpler early version of the encounter was probably indebted to an artistic tradition for some of its details, namely, the fall of the Saracen's horse and the falchion. For we find them represented in a medallion of stained glass dating from the first half of the twelfth century which until the French Revolution stood in the windows of St. Denis, and which although destroyed at that time is known to us through the copy found in Monfaucon's *Monumens de la Monarchie Française*, vol. I, pl. LIII.

The popularity of the overthrow of Saladin as an art motif is evi-



FIG. 36. DEL. WATERHOUSE
RICHARD COEUR DE LION



FIG. 37. DEL. WATERHOUSE
OVERTHROWS SALADIN

denced by two portrayals of it in the fourteenth century, both figured in my article in the *Publications of the Modern Language Association*. One is an illumination in an East Anglian Psalter of the year 1340 or thereabouts. The other is a half obliterated painting on a chest in Burgate church, Suffolk. Furthermore, in two early fourteenth century psalters there are illuminations of combats between a Christian knight and a Saracen which clearly show the influence of this motif and testify to its popularity.

The next six figures seem to have, as I have already remarked, no connection with any literary sources. They are to be regarded as simple *genre* subjects.

FIGURE 38

We have represented here the judicial combat or wager of battle. The participants are two youths, with hair cropped peculiarly, clad in light tunics. Their arms are a square buckler and a baston or short bladed pick.

Shurlock supposed that this is intended to depict the combat between Tristram and the seneschal of the King of Ireland which was agreed upon but never took place. The fact that the tile is made up of four quarters disposes of that conjecture.

Shurlock, on p. 25, quotes from ancient documents some interesting rules for such combats, rules which prescribed the length of the bastons, the shape of the bucklers, and the cropping of the hair "à la reonde." He reproduces from the Miscellaneous Rolls of Henry III the drawing of a combat between Walter Blowberne and Haman le Stare, similar in all its features to the tile design. George Neilson, in his *Trial by Combat*, has collected a number of medieval notices of such judicial duels, and on pp. 53 ff. notes the various prescriptions as to costume. He seems quite mistaken in his conclusion stated on p. 56,—which he admits is contrary to all the pictorial evidence,—that the heads of the champions were completely shaved. Besides the figures given by Shurlock, he refers to the well-known brass of Bishop Wyvil at Salisbury cathedral, in which the bishop's champion is represented standing in the gateway of Sherborne castle, which he had won for his master by his victory.⁷⁴ Neilson also refers to the signet of Henry of Fernburg, a famous fighter, which dates from 1258.⁷⁵ The baston is shown in the hands of a knightly effigy, which lies at Great Malvern Priory church.⁷⁶

⁷⁴Waller, *A Series of Monumental Brasses*, pl. 9.

⁷⁵Upton, *Notes*, p. 37.

⁷⁶Stothard, *Monumental Effigies*.



FIG. 38. DEL. WATERHOUSE
A JUDICIAL COMBAT



FIG. 39. AFTER SHURLOCK
A MOUNTED ARCHER



FIG. 40. AFTER SHURLOCK
A MOUNTED KNIGHT WITH CROSSBOW



FIG. 41. AFTER SHAW
A MOUNTED KNIGHT AND LION



FIG. 42. DEL. WATERHOUSE
A MOUNTED YOUTH AND LION



FIG. 41. AFTER SHAW
A MOUNTED KNIGHT AND LION



FIG. 42. DEL. WATERHOUSE
A MOUNTED YOUTH AND LION



FIG. 43. AFTER SHURLOCK
A KNIGHT AND LION

FIGURE 39

This tile depicts a bare-headed youth turning in his saddle as he rides a galloping horse: he holds in his left hand a bow, from which he has just discharged an arrow.

Compare this huntsman with that in Lethaby's *Westminster Abbey*, Fig. 20.

FIGURE 40

A knight in banded mail is shown riding a horse at full speed and leveling a crossbow against an unseen enemy in front of him. Shurlock's draughtsman has again as in Fig. 35 omitted the encircling white line.

FIGURE 41

A knight is riding with sword raised over his head against a lion, which rears on its hind legs and claws the horse's head. The knight's shield bears the device of a carbuncle. Shurlock does not reproduce this, and I have met with no fragments. The sole authority is a plate in Shaw's somewhat inaccurate series of reproductions.

FIGURE 42

We have here the figure of a man riding a galloping horse and driving a spear into the head of a lion, which has fastened his teeth and claws in the rump of the horse. Beneath the horse is a hound coursing. As Burges brought out in his comment,⁷⁷ the tile is remarkable in representing the rider as bare-legged and bare-armed, and riding without stirrups, and in omitting the nails in the horse's hoofs. These unusual features prove that the artist was imitating antique models. We have here then another of those curious indications, such as the sketch in Villard de Honnecourt's note-book,⁷⁸ the statues at Rheims, and the work of Niccolò Pisano, that medieval artists sometimes discovered and were lured into imitating the works of a bygone age.

Compare the hound in Lethaby's *Westminster Abbey*, Fig. 21.

FIGURE 43

A lion rampant attacks a knight on foot, who interposes his shield blazoned with a chevron and prepares to deliver a blow with his sword. The cutter of the mould has forgotten to allow for the reversal of the design in the tile; the knight carries his shield on his right arm and wields his sword with his left. No particular significance is to be attached in my opinion to the charge on the shield.

⁷⁷*Builder*, 1858, p. 502.

⁷⁸Lassus, R. Willis, *Facsimile of Sketch Book of Wilars de Honnecourt*, pl. LVII.

XI

The chief conclusions set forth in this study, some of them restatements of the findings of previous scholars, some of them the results of my own study, may best be divided into two classes, conclusions in regard to the tiles and conclusions in regard to their literary sources. As to the tiles, we may make safely the following statements:

1. They were made about the year 1270.
2. They give evidence of being executed at the instance of Henry III.
3. They show a resemblance to certain tiles in the pavement of Westminster chapter house.
4. They may be divided into two series, distinguished by slight differences in the manufacture and design.
5. They were accompanied by inscriptions, some in Anglo-Norman referring to the story of Tristram, some in Latin referring to the adventures of King Richard.

Upon the literary sources the tiles shed some light.

1. The source of the illustrations of the Tristram story was the Anglo-Norman romance by Thomas, now in large part lost.
2. The combined evidence of one tile and of the Norwegian translation of Thomas shows that Thomas assigned to Tristram a shield bearing a gold lion on a red field.
3. This fact affords a strong presumption that Thomas was thus paying a compliment to the royal house of England, and was probably under the patronage of Henry II. He would then have been one of that brilliant literary circle of which Henry's court was the centre, and may well have talked with Marie de France, Wace, and Giraldus Cambrensis, and if not with the Walter Map and Robert de Borron of the colophons, at least with poets who, whatever their names, were weaving the gorgeous tapestries of Arthurian romance.
4. The combined evidence of one tile and the *Folie Tristan* shows that Tristram's first voyage to Ireland as described by Thomas was a solitary drifting.
5. The source of the Richard incidents was probably one or more episodic poems, probably in Anglo-Norman, which later were translated and elaborated by a Lincolnshire minstrel, and embodied in the Middle English romance of *Richard Coeur de Lion*.
6. In the case of the story of the encounter with Saladin, the motif of the treacherous gift of the horse had probably been prefixed to the motif of Saladin's overthrow in the source which was consulted by the tile designer.

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JOSEPH RITSON
A CRITICAL BIOGRAPHY

BY
HENRY ALFRED BURD

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
1916

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PREFACE

Joseph Ritson is a minor figure in the literary history of the latter half of the eighteenth century. But he was one of the chief instruments in bringing about the changes in that period of remarkable transition. Although a potent factor in reviving the interest in ballads and old poetry and in hastening the acceptance of advanced standards of editorship and criticism, he has been largely ignored in the historical appraisal of the romantic movement. This neglect was not altogether unnatural. Ritson's method of criticism was so invidiously personal and his beliefs and habits were so eccentric that attention was attracted primarily to his peculiarities, while his stable qualities were overlooked by the majority. As a consequence of the silence which early enshrouded his name, an adequate estimate of his literary place has, up to the present, been impossible.

There have been three previous biographical treatments of Ritson. Joseph Haslewood's *Life and Publications of Ritson* professes to be, and is, nothing more than a catalogue of the publications. The *Memoir* by Sir Harris Nicolas is primarily a personal account based on Ritson's letters and the reminiscences of his nephew. Whatever critical judgments are essayed are colored by an undisguised endeavor to clear from censure the name of "honest Joseph Ritson". The account by Sir Sidney Lee in the *Dictionary of National Biography* is based mainly upon the *Memoir*. In the present study I have added to this material the contemporary magazine notices and critical reviews, eight letters of Ritson hitherto unnoticed, and frequent comments from the published and unpublished correspondence of other literary men of the time, especially the account of Ritson's death prepared for Percy. Several minor corrections of fact have been made, and, I trust, a major one of emphasis. For I have endeavored, without overlooking the personal peculiarities, to bring Ritson into proper perspective and to estimate his importance in his own day and his influence upon the subsequent course of literature and criticism. The material in Chapter IV is a substantial revision and enlargement of an article on "Joseph Ritson and Some Eighteenth Century Editors of Shakespeare", published in *Shakespeare Studies*, by members of the Department of English of the University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1916. I presented before the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters, a paper entitled, "Eight

Unedited Letters of Joseph Ritson'', which appears in the *Translations* of the Society, Vol. XIX, Part 1, p. 1 ff.

My obligations in the preparation of this work are too numerous for detailed notice. Special mention must, however, be made of my indebtedness to the authorities of the University of Illinois and the University of Wisconsin libraries for many courtesies; to the librarians of the University of Edinburgh, the Bodleian, and the British Museum libraries for the use of unedited manuscripts; to Sir Sidney Lee for calling my attention to the Selby letters and to Mr. Charles Davis for permission to print them from his manuscript; to Mr. Marsden J. Perry for opening to me his valuable collection of Ritsoniana and to Mr. George Parker Winship for unfailing kindness in making it readily available; to Professor H. S. V. Jones for helpful criticisms; to my colleague Mr. W. E. Alderman for reading the proof; and to Professor W. A. Oldfather for assistance in seeing the work through the press. My greatest debt is to Professor S. P. Sherman, who suggested the subject of this study and who has followed its progress with stimulating criticism.

H. A. B.

Madison, Wisconsin.

CHAPTER I

EARLY YEARS; LIFE AT STOCKTON-ON-TEES

Birth—Father—Mother—Family name—Home life—Formal education—Knowledge of languages—Legal apprenticeship—Antiquarian interests aroused—Becomes vegetarian—Publication of *Versees*—Journey to Edinburgh—Early friends: Cunningham, Shield, Holcroft, Brewster, Allan—Settles in London.

Joseph Ritson, son of Joseph Ritson and Jane Gibson, was born October 2, 1752, at Stockton-upon-Tees, Durham.¹ He was the second of a family of nine children, only five of whom survived infancy. The oldest child, Christopher,² and John, Sarah, and Elizabeth all died young. Anne, the third daughter, married Robert Frank of Stockton. Her son Joseph, named for his uncle, the subject of this sketch, became the critic's protégé and heir; and it is to him that posterity is indebted for most of the facts of Ritson's life³ and for the publication of many of his manuscripts. The next child, Sarah, curiously bearing the name of a deceased sister, became the wife of Jonathan Brown of Liverpool. Jane married one Thomas Thompson of Great Strickland. The youngest

¹The statements by Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century*, etc., VIII, p. 133, note, that Ritson was "a native of Stockton in Yorkshire", and *Illustrations of the Literary History of the Eighteenth Century*, etc., VIII, p. 588, that "Mr. Ritson was born at Stockton, ten miles from York, not at Stockton-upon-Tees", are evidently erroneous. Although Ritson did not employ the full appellation "Stockton-upon-Tees" in his correspondence, there is ample evidence that Durham and not York was his native county. He makes frequent mention of other towns in Durham but not in Yorkshire; his interest in local antiquities of various sorts was centered in Durham (cf. MSS. 4, 6, 10, Appendix C, II); he is designated in the Register of Gray's Inn as the "son of Joseph R. of Stockton, Durham"; and his first publication, the *Versees*, links the Tees with Stockton (ll. 11, 19).

²A Mrs. Kirby, a life-long friend of the Ritson family, whose remarks are reported by H. C. Selby in a letter to Bishop Percy (See Appendix A), declares that the first child was a daughter who died insane about the close of the eighteenth century. If this unsupported assertion is to be accredited, the family register must be increased to ten. *Dict. Nat. Biog.* gives eight children, probably omitting the second Sarah.

³Frank collected and edited *The Letters of Joseph Ritson, Esq.* London, 1833, and supplied most of the material for the *Memoir of the Author* prefixed to that collection by Sir Harris Nicolas.

daughter, Mary, seems never to have married. Joseph's extant correspondence contains only the meagerest mention of any of his sisters except Anne, but he seems in later life to have been assiduous in visiting the various members of the family on his infrequent journeys to the north of England.

Joseph Ritson senior was, in early life, a menial servant to a Stockton tobacconist and at the time of his marriage served one Robinson, a prominent corn dealer of that place. Later he became a corn grower and as such continued his business relations with Robinson. He seems to have owned nothing but the house he lived in and to have been forced to a hard life to support his large family. The general discontent of the agriculturist class and the disregard of the poor farmer by the moneyed merchant are reflected in his life. Although he had little or nothing to leave his family, their dark outlook was rendered still more forbidding by Robinson's refusal of a final business settlement during the elder Ritson's last illness. During this trying period the son's letters to his father were warm with filial affection and expressed an anxious concern for the whole family. On one occasion he wrote:

"Heaven knows how much I have all along pleased myself with thinking I should be able in a few years to render you some assistance towards making you easy and happy in your old age in return for the education and indulgence you bestowed on me in my youth. . . . I am sorry to hear Mr. Robinson should refuse the small comfort of having your affairs in some degree settled: on such an occasion as this his behavior is unfeeling and inhuman to the highest degree. . . . My heart bleeds to think of the distressed situation the whole family is in. I would to God I could be with you for a day—but alas! I should only add to your confusion. May heaven assist you with patience and resignation in your afflictions. I crave your blessing and earnestly commend myself to your remembrance."⁴

The father died, at no very advanced age, early in the year 1778. Joseph was then struggling for a livelihood in London, unable in any material way to assist the family at Stockton.

Jane Gibson, at the time of her marriage, was a servant in the family of Robinson, in whose service her husband was also engaged. It is not probable that she continued long as a bread-winner, for the burdens of her own family and home must soon have demanded all her attention. An uneducated peasant woman, she bestowed upon her family the simple and unaffected devotion characteristic of her class. The children maintained for her and for each other a deep and permanent affection. It was in relation to his mother that the stolid and undemonstrative Joseph betrayed his finer sensibilities. The illness which termin-

⁴*Letters*, I, pp. 4, 5.

ated in her death began in the spring of 1780. On May 5th of that year Joseph wrote to her: "I have so few, and those such slender connections with mankind, that if we lose you I shall not be very uneasy at anything that might happen to me." In the same letter, in answer to an inquiry from her as to what disposal she should make of her small belongings, he generously says: "It is very much my wish that you should dispose of everything you have to leave in favor of Nanny and her child [Anne Frank and Joseph.]"⁵ During the course of the summer he attempted to regale her with accounts of the London riots and uprisings among the lower classes, and she invariably replied with solicitous concern for his health and personal safety. In November, 1780, she died, and the love which Joseph had bestowed upon her seemed almost immediately to be diverted to his sister and her young son, for whom he had an affection almost paternal throughout the remainder of his life.

The Ritson family name was, according to Joseph, a corruption of Richardson. In his "Memoranda" he records the genesis of the word thus: "Richardson, Richison, Richson, Ricsen, Ritson." But it is highly doubtful if there is any other authority than personal fancy for this evolution. The name was, however, of considerable antiquity in Westmoreland and Cumberland, as it occurs in the parish register of Lowther at its commencement in 1550. But even with this assistance and with his own antiquarian interests Ritson was able to trace his pedigree with certainty only as far back as a great-grandfather Christopher Ritson, who died in 1703. This branch of the family belonged to the poor but respectable yeomanry of the north of England where it had held property for four generations.

From what is known of Joseph's immediate family, it is evident that life in the Ritson home must have been simple and affectionate. The necessity for the daily practice of economy in the material comforts of life in no way decreased but rather augmented the mutual love and sympathy of the family. Only one element, the religious atmosphere characteristic of the English middle and lower class families, seems to have been lacking. There is no evidence in the lives of the children so far as they are known, nor in their letters, to indicate Christian training. Neither is there any token in the early life of hostility to religious matters. The home seems only to have been non-religious, not irreligious. Joseph Ritson, reared in such a home, was no unnatural product of his environment. That there was a distinctly human side to his character, no one who has taken the trouble to look into his correspondence will deny. Yet the oft repeated remarks of cynical critics, who would paint him as an ogre who never fed on the milk of human kindness, make it

⁵*Ibid.*, I, pp. 12, 13.

necessary to point out that, however virulent and sarcastic he may have been towards certain editorial malefactors, he was, to his friends and family, a singularly generous, kind-hearted, and sympathetic man.

Ritson's formal education was quite limited but was no doubt the equal of that of most lads of his station in life. His only schoolmaster was the Reverend John Thompson of Stockton, afterwards vicar of Warden in Northumberland. It is reported that he often spoke of Ritson as one of his best scholars and was accustomed to relate some anecdotes indicative, even in his youth, of those mental eccentricities for which he was afterwards so noted.⁶ Elsewhere he has been described as "clever at his books and an apt scholar." As a lad at school he constantly shunned the company of other boys. He endeavored to associate with the girls, but they avoided him as much as possible, and he was consequently a half-voluntary outcast. Being much alone he grew morose and secretive and could be dislodged from his meditations by only one or two girls whom he secretly feared.⁷

The exact studies which Ritson pursued at Stockton are not definitely known. On the question of his knowledge of languages there is difference of opinion. It has been said of him that he was "totally unacquainted with the Greek and Latin languages,"⁸ and again, that he was "ignorant of Greek and self-taught in Latin,"⁹ He knew no Greek and seems never to have felt his ignorance of it a handicap in his work.¹⁰ At any rate he was very emphatic in urging his nephew not to "waste his time" in studying it. His estimate of the comparative value of Greek and Latin is clearly stated in a letter to his charge, June 4, 1785:

"You should pay all possible attention to Latin and writing. I do not apprehend Mr. Pattison can put you into Greek this summer, but if he should, I desire that you not waste your time in acquiring any more knowledge of that language, than consists in reading it with facility from a familiarity with the characters, though you should not understand a word. Latin will be useful to you, not Greek, and I beg you will pay no regard to any one who tells you otherwise."¹¹

⁶Memoirs of Ritson, in Brewster's *History of Stockton*, 1829, p. 370.

⁷Mrs. Kirby claims the distinction of being able to do anything she pleased with the eccentric youth, "he was so much afraid of her".

⁸Review of "Homer's Hymn to Venus", *Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. LXXIII, ii, p. 1031.

⁹DeQuincey's *Works*, ed. Masson, 1896. Vol. VI, p. 23, note.

¹⁰The only remark which might be construed as expressing remorse at his ignorance of the classics appears in a letter to Robert Harrison, Aug. 22, 1795. He is lamenting the inefficiency of the modern writers of ancient history: "Did we but all understand Greek and Latin as well as you do . . . my historian . . . should not be suffered to write a line." *Letters*, II, p. 99.

¹¹*Ibid.*, I, p. 102.

But Ritson was certainly familiar with the Latin language. Its rudiments, at least, were made familiar by composition and construing at Thompson's parish school. Although he may not have been critically skilled, he made constant use of it in his literary labors. Many of his sources exist only in that language, and his quotations from the Roman writers are apt and numerous. His knowledge of French, Italian, and Spanish was likewise sufficient to enable him to use them extensively. It may be doubted, however, if he secured much acquaintance with any of these tongues—except perhaps French—at school. His frequently acknowledged ignorance of German is not at all surprising.

In these early school days Ritson evidently began to cultivate the interest in history, old plays, songs and ballads, which later became his hobby and finally the absorbing interest of his life. In the letters to his nephew, whose early education he supervised and directed by correspondence from London, is to be found the chief expression of his own preferences as a child and a confession of the deficiencies in his early training. Writing in 1780 to his six year old nephew he says: "I have sent you a few books, &c, such as I was most entertained with, and instructed by, when I was at your own age; and I hope they will answer as good a purpose, if not a better to yourself. . . . You will find some few plays, and other things, which you may like better, perhaps, and know more of as you grow bigger."¹² The next year he sends him "a history of England, and a little book of childish songs", and commends him for "getting by heart so excellent a poem as *Chevy Chase*."¹³ A few months later he sends a collection of prints, pencils, and paints. "The prints are mostly such as I was very fond of when I was rather older than you are," he writes; "and the drawing book I still think a very pretty one." At the same time he commends *Don Quixote*, "which is one of the best books ever written", and Mother Goose's Melody, which is "an excellent thing."¹⁴ By the time Frank is seven years old Ritson advises him to write verses on the model of Mother Goose, adding significantly: "I regret nothing so much as that I did not make a practise of committing all such little things to writing the moment I heard them."¹⁵ His early education, so far as it went, was thorough, but advancement was due largely to his own unaided efforts. In later years he felt keenly the lack of intelligent and sympathetic guidance in his formative period, and endeavored to supply this want in the life of his young nephew.

¹²*Ibid.*, I, p. 11.

¹³*Ibid.*, I, p. 20.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, I, pp. 28, 29.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, I, p. 42.

Formal education beyond that to be obtained in the local school was, of course, out of the question for one in Ritson's station. There was a large family to support, and economic considerations made it imperative for the oldest son to contribute as early as possible to the family budget, or, at least, not to make any considerable drains upon it. Accordingly Joseph was put to work at an early age. It was perhaps just as well that he remained at home. As a youth he was sensitive, studious, and inclined to be secretive. At Stockton he had opportunity for private reading, and intimate daily contact with his fellows served as an antidote to the eccentric tendencies of his nature.

Being designed for the law, Joseph was at first apprenticed to a solicitor Raisbeck of Stockton, a son-in-law to Robinson, the corn merchant with whom his father dealt. His stay with Raisbeck was probably short, and he was subsequently removed to the office of Ralph Bradley,¹⁶ a distinguished conveyancer of Stockton. Here he remained as long as he was a resident of Stockton. Bradley knew his business extremely well and kept his apprentices close at their tasks. In 1772 Ritson wrote to John Cunningham, the poet: "I have never had a day nor the offer of a day (except Sunday) from my master since I entered his office." Ralph Hoar and John Crathorne, apprentices to Bradley together with Ritson, both remained on terms of intimacy with him during life. Joseph applied himself with considerable diligence and evidently proved an apt student. Bradley is reported to have "described young Ritson's abilities as too great to be wasted in such a place as Stockton",¹⁷ and it may be conjectured that it was at his master's suggestion that he decided to settle in London.

During his apprenticeship the duties of the office occupied a large portion of his time, but he undoubtedly found more or less leisure for non-professional reading according to his own fancy. Early visitors to Stockton report that Ritson, "like most young men of taste and talents", was more fond of reading poetry and ancient history, than law.¹⁸ That these early marked the chief lines of his interest is evident from the degree of familiarity with them exhibited in his first publications. His concern with poetry was deep and permanent and not long after his departure from Stockton almost completely overshadowed the interest in other antiquities which was taking root in these years.

¹⁶The name is mistakenly given "Bindley", in *Dict. Nat. Biog.* The exact dates of these changes are not known. Mrs. Kirby says Ritson was apprenticed to Bradley upon quitting the Latin school, and remained with him some year or two. See Appendix A.

¹⁷Nicolas, *Op. cit.* p. iii.

¹⁸See Holcroft's *Memoirs*, London, 1852, p. 93.

Conditions in northern England at the end of the third quarter of the eighteenth century were peculiarly fit for the making of an antiquarian. Durham and the surrounding counties were rich in British and Roman antiquities. Northumberland was widely known for its pre-Roman antiquities of various sorts. Within Ritson's reach were Hadrian's great wall, the Devil's Causeway, the London road, and various camps and cairns. At Newcastle-upon-Tyne, where he had many friends, were the ancient church and university buildings, and there, in 1771, excavations brought to light the river bridge constructed by the emperor Hadrian. In the county seat of Durham, where Ritson must have gone occasionally on professional business, was the magnificent cathedral founded in 1093, by William de Carilepho, in which lay the remains of St. Cuthbert, brought thither from Lindisfarne, and of Venerable Bede, removed from Jarrow.¹⁹ All of these relics of antiquity served to interest Ritson in the ancient history of his own county, and he early collected sufficient material to make him of valuable assistance to George Allan in his projected *History of Durham*, and to Richard Gough in the 1780 edition of his *British Topography*.²⁰ His early letters from London are replete with references to the antiquities of Durham, and he never through life lost interest in them.

Among the books which Ritson read at Stockton was one which influenced the whole of his subsequent life. Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees*, which formed the basis of one of the influential schools of thought of the early eighteenth century, was the direct cause of his forswearing animal food at the age of nineteen. It was, moreover, the source of his inspiration in other ways of which he was not aware, and which his biographers have overlooked. In his *Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food as a Moral Duty*, published in 1802, he recounts the circumstances in the following words:

"The compiler himself, induced to serious reflection, by the perusal of Mandeville's 'Fable of the Bees', in the year, 1772, being the nineteenth year of his age, has ever since, to the revisal of this sheet, firmly adhered to a milk and vegetable diet, having, at least, never tasted, during the whole course of those thirty years, a morsel of flesh, fish, or fowl, or anything to his knowledge prepared in or with those substances or any extract thereof, unless on one occasion, when tempted by wet, cold and hunger, in the south of Scotland, he ventured to eat a few potatoes dressed under the roast; nothing less repugnant to his feelings to be had; or except by ignorance or imposition; unless it may be in eating eggs, which, however, deprives no animal of life, though it may prevent some from coming into the world to be murdered and devoured by others."²¹

¹⁹*An Account of Durham, &c, Durham, 1804.*

²⁰Ritson's antiquarian services are more fully discussed in Chapter III.

²¹*Abstinence from Animal Food*, pp. 201-2.

The determination at so early an age to forswear animal food, and the adhering to that determination in the face of thirty years of good-natured ridicule by his friends and of bitter satire by his enemies, is highly characteristic of the man. After his death his Pythagorean diet was pointed to as proof of the contention that he had always been half-mad, or, at least, that the germs of insanity had been ever present. That there was a connection between the meager diet, the ill-nourished body, and the alienated mind cannot be doubted, but as we shall have occasion later²² to examine the nature of this connection somewhat more fully, it may be dismissed for the present. One thing, however, should be borne in mind. Far from being a mere fad, Ritson's vegetarian resolution was founded on deep and honest conviction and arose from a refined sense of humanity. There is no trait of the gentler side of his nature—the comparatively unknown facet of his character—that is more uniformly expressed throughout his correspondence than his love for the animal creation.

In 1772 appeared Ritson's earliest known publication and the only extant literary work of his Stockton years. This was a poem of 98 lines contributed to the *Newcastle Miscellany* under the caption *Versees Addressed to the Ladies of Stockton*.²³ The first 30 lines of this youthful production, in the nature of a general introduction to the individual "addresses", suggest the sentiment of the *Deserted Village* and point clearly to Ritson's interest in the romantic history of the North.

Accept, ye Fair, the tribute of my praise,
And deign a smile upon my humble lays;
For your applause i strike the tuneless lyre,
And strive to raise within a poets fire:
In hobbleing verse your charms attempt to sing;
Your charms adorn'd with ever blooming spring.

Ye female critics, read, *sans* spleen, my song,
Nor deem it or too languid, or too long;
For Your applause i write, your Frowns i fear;
Hence, fellows! hence! Your judgment's nothing here.
Let not harsh censure my poor rhimes asperse,
But with the Subject dignify the verse.

Where Tees in sweet meanders slowly glides,
And gently murmuring rolls his easy tides,
There stands a town, with peace and plenty crown'd,
For wit, for wealth, and loyal sons renown'd;

²²See Chapter VIII.

²³Reprinted at Stockton, n. d., and again as an Appendix to Haslewood's *Life of Ritson*, etc., 1824.

Far fame'd for dames, wise, charitable, chaste,
 And first in Beauty's annals ever place'd.
 In every age has STOCKTON been revere'd,
 Her sons have always been belove'd and fear'd.
 When, 'gainst the hardy legions of the North,
 Brave Percy led his youthful warriors forth,
 Her valiant deeds let History proclaim,
 And Cheviot hills record the fatal name.
 Her nymphs erst wont to trip the verdant groves,
 Seem'd sisters to the Gracees and the Loves.

Leave these, my muse, and sing, in careless rhimes,
 The special beauties of her modern times;
 Let them alone engage thy every care,
 Speak but the truth, and paint them as they are.

The remainder of the poem consists of eleven stanzas extolling the virtues of as many of the "Ladies", each designated by a name rich in literary associations: Titania, Olivia, Daphne, Chloe, Phillis, etc.

This youthful, amatory poem, without intrinsic merit, has a three-fold interest to the student of Ritson's life. It marks the beginning of a thirty years' connection with the press. It exhibits the earliest specimen of Ritson's peculiar orthography. In this private system as now employed the first personal pronoun is written with a small letter, and words formed with suffixes are invariably given their full form.²⁴ From a letter written to Isaac Reed, to whom he presented the copy for the *Versees* from which the above quotation is taken, it does not appear that he had then any intention of employing his system of orthography further. "I beg your acceptance of the enclosed", he writes, "as the only specimen of *my* system of spelling that ever was, or, perhaps, ever will be printed."²⁵ But the promise here held out was not lived up to, for Ritson's volumes were marred with eccentricities of spelling up to the very last.²⁶

Finally, the *Versees* suggests a question as to the extent and permanence of Ritson's interest in the writing of poetry. Several years

²⁴Cf. *versees*, hobbleing, gently, wonderous, rising, etc.

²⁵August 29, 1782. Quoted from Haselwood, *Some Account of the Life and Publications of the late Joseph Ritson, Esq.*, London, 1824, Appendix. Haselwood is "certain that the orthography of *Versees* was not adopted by him so early as the year when the lines were first printed", p. 5, note.

²⁶Ritson's orthography is more fully discussed later. See especially Chapters IV and VIII.

afterward he wrote a long versified epistle to his friend Ralph Hoar, in which appear these lines:

This many a year I have not made
Two lines of verse, though once my trade
You know it was—No, you can't tell,
But I can yet remember well.
When care was to my youth unknown,
My fancy free, my hours my own,
I lov'd i' th' laureat grove to stray,
The path was pleasant, prospect gay;
But now my genius sinks, nor knows
To make a couplet tink i' th' close.²⁷

It may, of course, be questioned whether Ritson's reference to poetry as "once my trade" means any more than that as a youth he wrote frequent exercises in verse such as every boy interested in literature attempts at some time or another. Such an interpretation lends color to Haslewood's otherwise unsubstantiated remark that Ritson "once intimated a claim to another poetical effusion" that appeared in the *Newcastle Miscellany*. But if Ritson's statement is to be taken literally, there is no need to lament the fact that he forsook the Muses for criticism and antiquarianism. Scholarship gained much thereby and Poetry lost nothing.

Toward the close of 1773 Ritson made an archaeological trip to Edinburgh. His diary records the fact that he went on foot, subsisted on a vegetable diet, and suffered the hardships incident to his mode of travel. It was at this time that he began his acquaintance with the Advocates' Library, where he spent many delightful hours. His antiquarian zeal led him to spend so much money for ancient Scottish books²⁸ that he was unable to pay for his lodging until a fellow traveller became so much interested in his discussion on the Battle of Flodden Field that he paid his reckoning for him. The concluding entry from the diary of this tour is one of the few intimate personal remains of the man.

"Friday, got my shoe mended; set off at eight, and after walking twelve hours, most of it in a heavy rain, arrived safe at home, after an absence of twelve days. The length of time I had been absent, the distance of my journey, and the vicissitudes of weather and pocket, the change of lodgings, and the many hardships

²⁷"New Year's Day, 1787", *Letters*, I, p. 123.

²⁸The line of his interest is indicated by the following books which he purchased, among others, on this trip: Robert of Pitscottie's *Chronicles of Scotland*, 1436-1565, Edinburgh, 1738; Thomas Ruddiman's *Dissertation Concerning the competition for the crown of Scotland*, 1748; and David Moyses's *Memoirs of the Affairs of Scotland, 1577-1603*, Edinburgh, 1755.

I had experienced in my little tour, all contribute to make the time of my arrival at home the happiest moment of my life."²⁹

Not the least important factors of Ritson's early years were the friendships formed at Stockton with men of literary talents and antiquarian tastes. His first known letter was written to John Cunningham (1729-1773), itinerant actor and small poet, who spent his dissolute life with strolling companies in the north of Britain and wrote occasional prologues, a farce or two, and some pastoral poems of slight merit. Cunningham met Ritson, then a young legal apprentice with literary aspirations, and immediately fell heir to his homage. They corresponded infrequently during the period of Cunningham's voluntary retirement to Newcastle where he was waiting "till my health either seems to return, or totally abandons me". The following letter from Ritson supplements the two from Cunningham given by Nicolas.³⁰

Montagu d. 15, fol. 219, 219b.

STOCKTON, Friday

. th Augt. 1772

DEAR SIR

The pleasure I received from your agreeable favor was a little damped by your treating as *Flattery* the most sincere Expressions my pen could commit to paper.

I can have small hopes of enjoying the least share in your Thoughts when you will not believe me if I speak Truth. But I had rather that you should tell me I lye than a 1000 others I could name should commend me for speaking Truth.

As to your Expectations of seeing Lanc.³¹ and me at Durham in the Race Week. I am sorry they had so bad a foundation. The pleasure I would have received from seeing you would have abundantly compensated for any trouble I might have been at in the Journey. But as I have never had a Day nor the Offer of a Day (except Sunday) from my Master since I entered his office, I never could have expected to succeed had I asked him. I believe Lanc. is much in the same Situation. Yet I hope (as it is likely we shall have Races) I shall enjoy that pleasure before *Christmas*—& if you are not inrolled in the List of ye Racing performers I have a little Expectation of seeing you at Whitby then.

I am exceedingly glad your Benefit at Darlington turned out to your Satisfaction. You say "you have often Experienced the friendship of Darl.³² as well as Stock.³³"—long very long may you continue to enjoy the Friendship of

²⁹Nicolas, *Op. cit.* p. v. Ritson later exhibited a decided antipathy to Scotchmen, but there is no indication that it was "acquired" on this journey, as Sir Sidney Lee states in *Dict. Nat. Biog.* Cf. Chapter VII.

³⁰pp. viii-ix. Cunningham's letters are dated respectively June 19, 1772 and July 23, 1773. Ritson's letter is evidently in reply to the first of these.

³¹Probably a fellow apprentice, Lancaster.

³²Darlington.

³³Stockton.

both. Tho' Merit is seldom rewarded so well as it should be—Yet the Place must be a damn'd stupid one indeed to let it be neglected.

We have had the "famous and unparalleled" Mr. Jonas the Jugler here—his Visit indeed was only short but as he performs his Part much better than any other Pretender to the Art—the Spectators are as much pleased as astonished.

There is not the least Necessity for the Letters you honor me with "to be left at Mrs. Barkers".³⁴ Directed to J. Ritson at Ra: Bradley's Esqr Stockton they will be much sooner received as I seldom know there is a Letter till three or four Days afterwards.

My imagination's so shallow, it is the most vain Undertaking possible, for me to pretend corresponding with you. Yet if my stupid Letters have only the good fortune to procure one in return—I am happier than if I were the Author of Mr. Pope's Literary Correspondence.

I am

Dear Sir

With the greatest Respect

Your most humble Servant

J. Ritson Jun

Ritson's interest in Cunningham continued for some years. At the time of the poet's death he collected a great many newspaper clippings concerning him, and from these and his personal knowledge wrote a short biographical sketch.³⁵ He printed several of Cunningham's songs in his edition of *English Songs*,³⁶ and in the "Historical Essay on National Song" which precedes that collection, included this unbiased estimate of his poetic ability:³⁷

"Cunningham, though not equal to his countryman [Goldsmith] in native genius, and still less so in learned application, possesses a pleasing simplicity which cannot fail to recommend him to a reader of unadulterated taste. This simplicity may, perhaps, in some of his compositions, be thought too great; but when it is known that they were necessarily adapted to the intellects of a country theatre, little censure can be justly incurred by the poet."

During the early days of his acquaintance with Cunningham, Ritson met William Shield (1748-1829), the famous musical composer whom Cunningham had been instrumental in placing in an advantageous position as a director. Ritson remained on terms of comparative intimacy

³⁴Ritson's landlady.

³⁵The "Life" was printed by Nicolas, Op. cit. p. vii, note. "Cunningham's Poems, with an account of him in manuscript by Mr. Ritson, and extracts from Newspapers respecting him", formed Lot 808 of the sale of Ritson's library.

³⁶*A Select Collection of English Songs*, 3 vols, 1783. References are to second edition, 1813, I, pp. 230, 236; II, p. 165. Another song is included in *The Northumberland Garland*, etc., 1795, p. 69.

³⁷*English Songs*, I, pp. xc-xci. See also *Letters*, I, p. 144, and Walker's *Historical Memoirs of the Irish Bards*, 1786, p. 85.

with Shield until death. He seems to have written at least one song which Shield set to music and to have contributed others.³⁸ The notation of the music for his collections of *English* and *Scotish Songs* was done largely by his friend. Nor did he hesitate to call upon Shield to supplement his deficient musical knowledge when he was endeavoring to take down ballads from oral tradition.³⁹ It was in company with Shield that Ritson made his only continental tour, a visit to France in 1791.⁴⁰

Thomas Holcroft (1744-1809), afterward famous for his liberal views on politics and religion, was a third member of the strolling theatrical companies whose acquaintance Ritson made at Stockton. The exact date of their meeting is not known.⁴¹ It may have been on one of Ritson's visits to Durham or Newcastle, or when Holcroft's company played at Stockton; and it is highly probable that Cunningham, Shield, and Holcroft, on one of their companionable pedestrian expeditions to the outlying towns, called upon Ritson in a body. Later, after both Ritson and Holcroft had settled in London and a similarity of views had drawn them together, their friendship was kept fresh by frequent intercourse.⁴²

Two other early acquaintances of Ritson deserve mention because of their part in arousing and advancing his antiquarian interests. John Brewster (1753-1842), a native of Newcastle, was officially connected with the church at Stockton from 1776 to 1805. His life-long interest in the antiquities of Stockton and his later reliance on Ritson for assistance in his publications,⁴³ seem to point to an acquaintance, however cursory, before the critic left Stockton. But it was to George Allan (1736-1800) the famous antiquary of Darlington, that Ritson was most deeply indebted for his interest in the local antiquities of Stockton.⁴⁴ His friendship with Allan was long and their correspondence extensive. While at Stockton he laid himself under obligations to Allan for material and for valuable suggestions for his work, and when he went to London

³⁸Nicolas, *Op. cit.* p. vi. The information comes from some notes of Ritson to Shield, then in the possession of Joseph Frank but never published.

³⁹*Letters*, II, p. 221.

⁴⁰See Chapter VIII.

⁴¹According to his *Memoirs*, pp. 92-3, Holcroft must have met Ritson sometime between the spring of 1776 and the fall of 1777, but this is obviously impossible. At the time of their meeting Ritson is described as "a young legal apprentice of that place [Stockton]", but he was settled in London by the beginning of 1776, probably late in 1775. They must then have met before Holcroft joined Bates's company which included Stockton in its 1776-7 tour.

⁴²For a discussion of their later connection see Chapter VIII.

⁴³See Chapter VI.

⁴⁴See Chapter III.

it was chiefly through the instrumentality of Allan that he was early afforded the opportunity of carrying on his literary researches there.

The exact date of Ritson's departure for London is not known. It has been variously stated that he left Stockton "as early as his twentieth year",⁴⁵ "in his twenty-second year",⁴⁶ and that he "settled in London in 1775".⁴⁷ However, it is evident from a letter written from Stockton, April 19, 1775,⁴⁸ that he had not yet left his native town and at that time saw no prospect of getting farther than its immediate neighborhood. In an unpublished letter of John McLaren to Barnslie Toleman, dated "Stockton, Nov. 5, 1775", "Mr. Joseph Ritson, a young gentleman of this place", is commissioned with a small errand.⁴⁹ The earliest extant letter written from London is under date of August 26, 1776.⁵⁰ It appears, then, that it was not earlier than the end of 1775 or the beginning of 1776 that Ritson took his leave of Stockton. In all likelihood he walked the 250 miles to London, and his baggage was probably light, for we are told that he "used to take his journeys on foot, with a couple of shirts in his pocket, and if he found his bundle too heavy, he would, without hesitation, throw one of his shirts away".⁵¹ With neither impedimenta nor family connections he arrived in the city, ostensibly to seek a larger field for the exercise of his legal talents, but with a strong desire to explore the treasures of the libraries and museums.

⁴⁵Haslewood, *Op. cit.* p. 4.

⁴⁶*Encyc. Brit.*, art. "Ritson".

⁴⁷Nicolas, *Op. cit.* p. x.

⁴⁸Ritson to Allan, *Lit. Anec.*, VIII, p. 350, note.

⁴⁹MS. Douce d. 1. Bodleian.

⁵⁰Ritson to Allan, *Letters*, I, p. 1.

⁵¹Mrs. Kirby's comment, cited by Selby. See Appendix A.

CHAPTER II

LONDON LIFE; BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL CAREER

Takes clerkship with Masterman and Lloyd—Sets up for himself as conveyancer—Engages permanent chambers in Gray's Inn—Considers return to Stockton—Accepts crown appointment as High Bailiff—Becomes law student—Receives call to the bar—Practises in chambers—Stands for Durham circuit—Attitude toward profession—Legal publications: *Digest of the Court Leet*, *Jurisdiction of the Court Leet*, *Office of Constable*, *Observations on a Deed*, *Office of Bailiff*, Unpublished MSS.—Manages sister's affairs—Directs nephew's career—Method of handling money—Misunderstanding with Rowntree—Trouble with property—Disastrous speculations—Business creed and professional ethics.

Ritson went up to London as a young man interested in the law and concerned with securing an opportunity to use and develop his abilities in gaining a livelihood and obtaining advancement in his profession. To the men with whom he was most intimately associated there, he appeared as a man of eccentric habits, with a thorough knowledge of his branch of the law, with the usual interest in business and politics, and with an unusual interest in literary antiquities. His biographers have discoursed at greater or less length on his literary activities, but they have said next to nothing about the other interests of his life. He was by profession a conveyancer, not a literary antiquary; and his ostensible business was with charters and deeds, not with ancient poetry and romances. Although he came to consider literary interests of first importance, his pursuit of them was made possible only by careful attention to the law.

Very soon after his arrival in London Ritson was engaged as clerk in the conveyancing department of Masterman and Lloyd, attorneys of Gray's Inn. He settled in chambers with a man by the name of Robinson¹ and began his London apprenticeship of nearly five years on an annual salary of £150. There is every reason to believe that this period of service was equally satisfactory to himself and his employers. By studious attention to duties he widened his knowledge of conveyancing, secured a limited personal acquaintance among frequenters of the Inns of Court, and gained the confidence which enabled him to open

¹The similarity of names suggests the question of whether Robinson of Stockton, the employer of his father and mother, had anything to do with securing Ritson's position in London.

an office of his own. Masterman, who was a member of Parliament, took an especial interest in him and aided him in a pecuniary way by allowing him the use of chambers at reduced rates, furnishing him with government franks for his correspondence, and loaning him small sums at need. This benevolence continued even after Ritson had left his first position, and he always referred to Masterman with expressions of gratitude and esteem.²

After a service of more than four years with Masterman and Lloyd, Ritson determined to set up for himself as a Conveyancer, or Special Pleader.³ Late in 1780 he accordingly removed to No. 8 Holborn Court, Gray's Inn,⁴ where he occupied chambers uninterruptedly till his death. Having severed his connection with his old masters, Ritson began his professional career without the prestige of either name or wealth. He had thoroughly mastered the details of conveyancing, but his acquaintance in London was not extensive and his clients were necessarily drawn from a limited circle. His salary no longer available, he was thrown entirely upon his own resources and at times almost despaired of being able to make his own way in the metropolis. During these anxious months when every day was a drain on his small saving and brought

²The following amusing reference to Masterman is from Ritson's versified letter to Hoar (*Letters*, I, p. 120):

My old friend Masterman is gone,
And now the chambers are my own:
Not gratis—that you must not think,
For, though I did not down the chink,
A bargain still a bargain is,
And I did for them pay, I wis.

He left me nothing but a ring,
Nor did I look for any thing,
Knowing his mind not that way tended:
Though some are mightily offended;
And I, who ow'd a hundred pound,
Could wish he had released the bond.

³"When I am a little more settled (having left Mr. Lloyd, and begun a little *drawing business* for myself)" Ritson to Allan, Nov. 24, 1790, in *Lit. Anec.* VIII, p. 133. This would indicate that the change was a very recent one. There is nothing to bear out the suggestion of Nicolas, *Op. cit.*, p. xvi, that Ritson set up for himself *before* 1780.

⁴Holborn Court is now known as South Square. No. 8 has been rebuilt and is at present occupied by the library and offices.

little in the way of income, his thoughts reverted to Stockton, and he considered the advisability of returning there to practise where he was well known. He even went so far as to make inquiries of his friend Matthew Wadeson, who seems not to have encouraged his coming because the conveyancing business was well taken care of by the long-established office of one John Reed. But with perseverance and conscientious application his period of probation was not long. Shortly the times began to mend and within two years he felt that his prospects in London were so good that he could ill afford to abandon what he had so hardly gained and begin anew in a different location. When Reed died, in 1782, Wadeson immediately wrote to Ritson and suggested that if he was still desirous of settling in Stockton, a favorable opportunity now offered. Ritson advised his young friend, Jack Rowntree, a former apprentice to Reed, to take the place, and wrote to Wadeson:

"I well know that your friendship and good wishes prompted you to think of me and my former inquiries. But times and circumstances are so much changed since I made them, that it is impossible for me, now, to think of altering my situation, as Rowntree is every way qualified to prevent Mr. Reed's loss, as a professional man, from being felt by his clients and the public: and I doubt not that the prospect, which is certainly most flattering, will every day become more satisfactory and interesting."⁵

This, of course, does not mean that Ritson had become suddenly rich, or even that he was beyond the pinch of poverty, but simply that he had reached the point where he could securely look forward to an increasing business that would eventually render him independent. Aside from pecuniary considerations there was another factor that undoubtedly weighed heavily in his decision to remain at London. By this time he had been reading for half a decade in the British Museum and Bodleian Libraries and was so deeply interested in antiquarian research that only the most unfavorable combination of circumstances could have induced him to retire into the country where he would have no opportunity of continuing this study.

After two years more of struggle for recognition and a competence, Ritson achieved the goal of many a young English professional man—an office under the crown. Through the generous exertions of his friend and former employer, Masterman, he was on May 1, 1784, appointed High Bailiff of the Liberty of the Savoy. His chief concern was that the appointment should be made permanent, and this hope was fulfilled on January 25, 1786, when he was granted the patent of the office for

⁵*Letters*, I, p. 52.

life. This place he hoped would bring him in about one hundred and fifty pounds a year, but he seems actually to have realized less than one hundred pounds from it.⁶ Even though the salary did not prove to be what he had expected, the position afforded a new lease of life to Ritson. Once more he was assured of a definite annual income. This removed the uncertainty as to his means of livelihood and, because the duties of the office were not onerous, afforded him an opportunity to devote more time to his literary studies, then grown to quite considerable proportions.

Although pleased with his appointment as Bailiff, Ritson did not exaggerate its importance and replied to the felicitations of friends that he considered it "far too poor a subject for congratulation". He was, however, seriously impressed with the responsibilities of the office. He soon discovered that to perform its duties well required a more extensive legal knowledge than he possessed, and his determination to do thoroughly everything he undertook caused him to resolve to be called to the bar. Accordingly he was admitted to Gray's Inn as a student, May 6, 1784, at the beginning of the Easter term.⁷ Having kept the usual term of five years as a student, and having satisfied the requirements of the Benchers, he was called to the bar, May 20, 1789. He must, therefore have taken the customary oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy, in spite of their seeming conflict with the anti-religious views which he probably held then and unblushingly proclaimed later in life.⁸

Beyond this stage Ritson did not advance in his profession. He was never raised to the degree of Benchet, and he did not practise in open court. His failure to achieve preferment in his own Inn was in large measure the result of his peculiar notions and his eccentric habits of life. Persistence in the vegetarian diet begun at Stockton, an extremely economical mode of living, both as to food and dress, and an increasing emphasis on revolutionary ideas in politics and religion served to mark him off from his fellows. These peculiarities, coupled with increasing constitutional ailments, made him seclusive and uncommunicative. Just as he avoided his playmates at school, so as a man he had few intimates. He confessed to only a limited acquaintance among the law firms of London.⁹ The Benchers of his Inn he considered "a parcel of fools",

⁶"I possess a place which brings me in from fifty to one hundred a year." *Ibid.*, II, p.43.

⁷The entry in the records of Gray's Inn on this occasion is: "Joseph Ritson, son of Joseph R. of Stockton, Durham, gent." The only other time Ritson's name appears in the records is where it occurs once in the formal record of a lease.

⁸See Chapter VIII and Appendices A and B.

⁹*Letters*, I, p. 160.

and he scarcely knew the men who lived nearest to him. Robert Smith says:

"Mr. Ritson lived in the same staircase with me in Gray's Inn for many years, and the common civilities of the day passed between us, but nothing more—we never visited."¹⁰

As a natural corollary to these traits of character, Ritson limited his practice as Conveyancer and Consulting Barrister to chambers. As Barrister-at-law he had the privilege of practising before the superior courts of the land, but only once, and that five years after his admission to the bar, is he known to have appeared in court wearing his professional costume, and then he was merely a spectator, not an advocate. This was on the occasion of Horne Tooke's trial for high treason. When Ritson found that speculators were selling seats in the court room at a guinea each, he shyly donned his wig and gown and secured free entrance.¹¹

Two other factors operated to retard Ritson's advancement in the profession. The first was his antagonism to the government in all matters of politics. In the preface to a little volume of *Tables shewing the Descent of the Crown of England*, which he printed privately in 1778 because he said he "never dared to publish it", he declared himself a Jacobite and set forth his political beliefs in extremely vigorous language.¹² But despite his decided opinions he manifested only a passing interest in politics, and when he expressed himself it was usually to condemn the government. Periods of upheaval and popular excitement stimulated him to comment but not to action. Of the popular disturbances in London in June, 1780, he was an interested spectator though in no way a participant. His ardent expression of sympathy with the purposes of the Protestant Society and his condemnation of the "scoundrel ministry" foreshadow the revolutionary ardor which later fired him.¹³ When the much maligned War Ministry resigned in 1782, Ritson referred to the event as,

"the dismissal of those miscreant blockheads who formed the late infamous administration, some of whom it is to be hoped will yet hop headless".¹⁴

Aside from these instances there is no hint of Ritson's interest in political

¹⁰See Appendix A.

¹¹*Letters*, II, p. 57.

¹²Haslewood, *Op. Cit.*, p. 8. *The Descent of the Crown* is discussed in the following chapter.

¹³*Letters*, I, pp. 13-17. See also Robert Bisset, *The History of the Reign of George III*, 2nd edition, London, 1820, Vol. III, p. 21 ff.

¹⁴*Letters*, I, p. 44.

events in London during the early years of his residence there. He seemed to be much more concerned with legal and political conditions in the region of Stockton than in his immediate environs. Coupled with his revolutionary tendencies this endeavor to follow closely and even to help direct the politics of the North while he practised his profession in London was sufficiently distracting to prevent high success in either direction. Not only did he take a keen interest and occasionally a personal share in the various elections at Stockton, but on one occasion he yielded to the entreaties of friends to stand for the Durham circuit. He went into the North for the campaign but was defeated in the election and professed no reluctance at losing the position.¹⁵

The second factor was his increasing interest in literature. His preference for the study of poetical antiquities was so marked that he constantly assumed a sneering attitude toward the law. He had a great contempt for the profession in general and for attorneys in particular. The law he treated as a mere bread-and-butter profession and feelingly expressed his desire to do what he knew was impossible under the circumstances—to relinquish it altogether. His crown appointment he spoke of as “that little dirty place in the Savoy”, and yet he was forced to hold on to it as the only assured source of regular income. He never lost an opportunity to swinge the attorneys, and his remarks run the gamut from humorous jibes to serious charges of dishonesty. With satiric facetiousness he thus congratulates Rowntree on his progress in the profession:

“I hear with pleasure the increase of your business. To establish yourself at Stockton you have nothing to do but, by dint of evidence, &c, to gain a desperate cause or two, ruin two or three honest, and hang two or three innocent men, and your fortune is made.”¹⁶

Again he writes:

“Apropos; have you got a sufficient number of *credible witnesses*? There are a few devilish good hands in that line hereabouts, which I fancy you might have pretty reasonable. N. B. I assure you I have no interest in this proposal myself, as I belong to a quite different gang.”¹⁷

To his nephew, who is thinking of becoming one, he describes attorneys as,

“not only the most ignorant and capricious, but the most insincere, unprincipled, and in every respect, worthless of men,”¹⁸

¹⁵*Ibid.*, I, pp. 171, 197, and *passim*.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, I, p. 72.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, I, p. 80.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, II, p. 23.

and then threatens him with absolute worthlessness if he does not immediately study to be an attorney.

There may be a measure of personal animus back of these violent outbursts, but there is something more. They are the genuine expression of Ritson's sincere beliefs. Not only did he feel that attorneys were, as a class, dishonest, but that they were useless parasites upon society. He would do away with the existing need for them by going back to elemental principles. The innocent man, he declared, needs no defense at the bar of justice; the guilty man deserves none. Ergo, justice will be done without the expense of attorneys. However absurd such a theory may appear, it was nevertheless sincere. Ritson exemplified his beliefs in his own conduct. He never willingly allowed himself to be referred to as an attorney,¹⁹ but considered the epithet opprobrious. To Rowntree he once declared vehemently, "I would not act the part of attorney for you nor any man."²⁰ On another occasion he wrote:

"You need not have been under the least apprehension of my addressing you by so odious a title as Attorney-at-law You are just beginning to value a childish distinction which I have learned to be ashamed of."²¹

But with all his sneering and contemptuousness Ritson yet had a real, though perhaps a forced, interest in the law. He was conscientious enough to endeavor to do well whatever he undertook, whether he liked it or not. Consequently he applied himself assiduously to the study of his profession, especially during his early years in London. When he received the appointment as High Bailiff of the Savoy, he redoubled his energy with the result that he not only was admitted to the bar but also published three volumes dealing with his office. The natural antiquarian tendency of his interests gave an unmistakable character both to the legal compilations which he published and to the manuscripts which he prepared but did not put to press.

In the same year with his call to the bar, 1789, Ritson brought out the first²² of his publications on subjects connected with his profession.

¹⁹Ritson was, strictly speaking, a barrister, not an attorney, and he protested against the tendency of his day to slur over the distinction. As a barrister he limited his practice to conveyancing, a branch of the law which, however dry and uninteresting it may appear to the average individual, is exempt from the criticisms which he levelled against attorneys.

²⁰*Letters*, I, p. 80.

²¹*Ibid.*, I, p. 173.

²²In the list of Ritson's works in S. A. Allibone's *Critical Dictionary of English Literature*, etc., Philadelphia and London, 1908, is included *The Lord High Steward of England; or an Historical Dissertation on the Origin, Antiquity, and Functions of that Officer. . . . with Remarks on the antient and modern*

This was *A Digest of the Proceedings of the Court Leet of the Manor and Liberty of Savoy, parcel of the Duchy of Lancaster, in the county of Middlesex: from the year 1682 to the present time*. This is the first of two publications on the Court Leet. It is the natural product of five years of study since his appointment as High Bailiff of the Savoy and is a minute record of the thoroughness with which he delved into the antiquities of the office. His interest in the Court Leet is otherwise symptomatic. The most ancient court in the land, originating in the early feudal days and for ages the most authoritative court of record in existence, it had sunk, by the end of the eighteenth century, to the place of least authority and was ultimately entirely superseded by the modern courts of the justices. Only an antiquarian would find pleasure in delving into the ancient records of an institution whose glory was already faded and whose usefulness was practically negligible.

In 1791 appeared *The Jurisdiction of the Court Leet: Exemplified in the Articles which the Jury or Inquest for the King, In that Court, is Charged and Sworn, and by Law Enjoined to Inquire of and Present*.

Modes of trying Peers. . . . To which is added, A Catalogue of the High Stewards of England. . . . London, 1776. There are plausible reasons for concluding this to be the work of Ritson. The volume was published anonymously, as were most of Ritson's. The subject is one in which Ritson was undoubtedly interested, especially after his appointment as High Bailiff, for his superior officer was the High Steward. The general treatment of the subject is comparable to that in his acknowledged law works, consisting of a compilation of extracts from ancient authorities and citations from the statutes, with little or no authorial comment. But the following considerations seem to prove conclusively that the work is not Ritson's. 1. The "Historical Dissertation" begins with these sentences:

"Having been employed for some time past in an historical research, relative to some of our Norman Princes, I had occasion to inform myself of the nature of the great offices, which were hereditary from the time of William the First. Of these, the four principal were the Steward, the Chamberlain, the Constable and the Mareschal, of England."

The *High Steward* was published in 1776, Ritson's first year in London. There is no evidence that he was interested in this subject while in Stockton. Of the "four principal offices" mentioned here, Ritson wrote on the Constable, but there is no hint in that volume that he had been previously concerned with this or allied subjects. 2. The writer of the *High Steward* makes constant use of the first personal pronoun singular. This is all but totally unknown in Ritson's publications. In the law books he refers to himself as "the compiler", "the writer", or "the editor", never as "I". 3. The *High Steward* was not included in *Law Tracts*, 1794, a volume published by Ritson with his name on the title page and including his legal publications prior to that date.

*Together with Approved Precedents.*²³ Although this was his second publication dealing with the Court Leet, it did not by any means exhaust the material he had gathered on that subject. His original purpose and the reasons for its partial fulfilment are explained in the "Advertisement":

"It was originally intended that the compiler's publication on the subject here treated of should have comprised all that, to his knowledge, had been said, or, in his judgment, could be said, upon it. Large collections were made for the purpose, and the work partially proceeded in: but the bulk of the volume and the scanty sale it was likely to experience effectually discouraged him from proceeding with that plan, and produced the Introduction and Analysis now presented to the public."

The "Introduction" treats of the name of the court, its antiquity, nature, and present state. It is wholly antiquarian and impersonal and affords a minute and accurate history of the subject. The "Analysis" consists of thirteen chapters, fully annotated, on the historical development of the officers and functions of the court, and a small body of precedents of presentments and judgments in Leet. The work was received with great favor among the profession as a valuable contribution to the study of legal antiquities.²⁴

Ritson's third legal publication, and the second to appear in 1791, was *The Office of Constable: being an entirely New Compendium of the Law concerning that Ancient Minister for the conservation of the peace. Carefully compiled from the best authorities. With a Preface; and an Introduction, containing some account of the origin and antiquity of the office.*²⁵ It was prompted by "a sincere wish to benefit the community, by furnishing its most ancient, most constitutional, and most useful officer with a compendious system or manual of his duty or powers".²⁶ This work, like the preceding volumes, is a "mere epitome of the original compilation", for a pamphlet of fifty pages, at a moderate price, seemed more likely to be purchased by the constables, whom it was designed to benefit, and understood when read than a more expensive and less concise volume.

²³A second edition "with great additions" was published from Ritson's annotated manuscript (Lot 978 of his library sale) in 1809, and a third in 1816.

²⁴See *Athenaeum*, Vol. V, p. 150.

²⁵The second edition, enlarged from Ritson's manuscript (Lot 976 of his library sale), was published in 1815. In 1794 these three volumes (*Proceedings of the Court Leet, Jurisdiction of the Court Leet, Office of Constable*) were reprinted as one, with the title, *Law Tracts, by Joseph Ritson, of Gray's Inn, Barrister.*

²⁶*Office of Constable*, Preface, p. iii.

In the Preface Ritson takes up the cudgels in defense of the constable and in opposition to the lawmakers. With the vigorous denunciation and the sarcastic ridicule which brought him notoriety as a literary critic and antagonist he protests against the continuous making of new laws without purging the statutes of those which are obsolete and useless. There are many laws on the statute books, he declares, which are not, and many more which ought not to be, in force. In fact,

"every little dirty parish in the environs of London must have a law for itself. The churchwardens can provide the money, the attorney wants a job, the justice looks forward to the penalties, and the 'gemmen of the westry' like authority: an act of parliament is accordingly obtained and being an admirable compound of ignorance and knavery, cannot fail of proving exceedingly beneficial to the community."²⁷

The result is that the officers of the law, especially the constables, are ignorant of their powers and duties. It was Blackstone's opinion that, considering the type of men who were elected constables, they ought to be kept in ignorance of their powers. To this view Ritson takes violent exception. He draws upon Shakespeare for a satire on the typical English constable²⁸ and then proposes a number of radical reforms which he has the perspicuity to see are too constructive and progressive to be adopted.

The Introduction and body of the work are of the same type as the volumes on the Court Leet, except that here Ritson occasionally ventures far enough away from his sources to give a personal observation in a footnote. Like its predecessors, this pamphlet is a useful, and certainly a learned and accurate compilation.

The three volumes already considered were the only legal publications to appear during Ritson's life. Yet they comprise only a small part of the material actually collected and arranged as a result of his professional interests. At least eight manuscripts were left in varying degrees of preparation and but two of these were published posthumously. Before his death Ritson had revised for publication the manuscript of *Practical Points, or, Maxims in Conveyancing*, by his old master, Ralph Bradley. When this volume was published in 1804, Ritson's thirty-four page pamphlet, *Critical Observations on the Various and Essential Parts of a Deed*, was appended to it. In this little work the deed is taken up clause by clause and elucidated. In 1811 Joseph Frank published Ritson's *Office of a Bailiff of a Liberty*, which he says was

²⁷*Ibid.*, p. vi. Ritson is here only voicing a protest which had been made in England for many generations. See his footnotes.

²⁸Cf. Elbow in *Measure for Measure*, Dull in *Love's Labors Lost*, and Dogberry in *Much Ado*.

compiled about the same period as the three tracts published during the author's lifetime, and which it very closely resembles in manner.

In addition to these five published volumes there were six manuscript collections of a legal nature.²⁹ It is almost certain that the chief labor on all these compilations was done before 1795, for ill health and an absorbing interest in literary affairs took the major portion of his time and attention after that date. When it is remembered that by 1795, in addition to the dozen legal works, he had actually published twenty-six volumes and fragments of three others (to say nothing of projects in hand), the mere bulk of work accomplished is astonishing. But more important than this is the thoroughness and accuracy with which all the work was done. Although Ritson's distaste for the law as a profession must have made part of the labor of compiling his legal publications mere task work, yet the fact that they are all antiquarian in nature and involve to a greater or less degree the type of work in which he took greatest interest in the realm of poetry is sufficient evidence that he did not get far afield from his vital interests.

Such is the bare skeleton of Ritson's professional career—his office, his attitude toward the law, his legal publications. But very little of the intimate personal character of the man is revealed in these. That phase of his character is to be seen in both the general and specific conduct of business affairs. It is most intimately and most favorably exhibited in the care and attention bestowed upon his sister and nephew. It shows to less advantage in his pecuniary transactions with various friends and in the misunderstandings and disagreements which not infrequently arose therefrom. It is again seen to disadvantage in the disastrous maladministration of his own property. And the unfortunate disparity between theory and practise, between ideal and accomplishment, is clear from a knowledge of his business creed and professional ethics.

Upon the death of his parents Ritson generously assumed the management of his sister's affairs. He had little inclination for the details of business and was quite frank in acknowledging his weakness in this direction.³⁰ There were certain general principles of conduct by which he was guided in all matters, but he lacked the tact to adapt them to various specific cases. As a consequence he contented himself with

²⁹Nos. 1-6, Appendix C, II.

³⁰Ritson's letters contain frequent mention of his business incompetence:

"However as you are a much better judge of these things [the value of a house] than I can pretend to be, I shall readily submit to your opinion"; ". . . It would be best to let the house, till at least as great a fool as myself wants to buy one"; "I wish you, who can manage everything of the nature of business, by familiar methods to which I am a total stranger, would . . ."; etc.

knowing that his sister was supplied with all the necessities for an economical but comfortable existence and left the details to Matthew Wadson, a resident of Stockton, in whose business sagacity he had great confidence. In this indirect manner his sister's affairs were undoubtedly more skilfully conducted than if he had attempted to manage them entirely alone.

Ritson's London business life is bound up closely with the life of his nephew, Joseph Frank, and is intimately revealed through letters to him. He undertook the entire expense of Frank's education, cared for him when he came to London to enter business, and followed his subsequent career with loving interest, being his adviser in every important step of life. We have already seen how he sent him books and materials for his Latin school days. He was so accustomed to sending useful presents that he felt it necessary to apologize when an occasion passed without its gift. Early in January, 1782, he writes:

"I am only poor at present, or I would have sent you a New Year's gift: but if you will grow wiser and better behaved than you were when I left you, I won't forget you on the approach of better times."³¹

Better times were slow in coming, and often in the struggle against poverty and in the business competition of the great city Ritson reflected on the wisdom of his change from Stockton to London and regretted the lack of experienced counsel in his youth. As a consequence he sought constantly to give his nephew the advice which he knew from experience would be helpful to a young man in his situation. At an early age both Frank and his mother became anxious for him to "get into business" and importuned Ritson's aid in placing him advantageously. Feeling that it would be unwise for the lad to curtail his education in order to enter professional life, Ritson wrote to his sister:

"I think Joe had better go to school another year, and we shall then determine what to make of him. He will be only fifteen, and you know I was much more before I went to business."³²

He gave the same counsel to his nephew:

"I must beg leave to say . . . that it will be much better for you to mind your book, than to come to London. You will see it soon enough in all likelihood though you will have little reason to lament if you never see it at all."³³

But they were insistent, and in the winter, more to relieve the anxiety of the mother than to satisfy the boy's whim, Ritson promised to take

³¹*Letters*, I, p. 40.

³²*Ibid.*, I, p. 90.

³³*Ibid.*, I, p. 91.

Frank to London the next summer to live with him and study for his profession. Something of Ritson's habits of life may be gleaned from his advice to his nephew to spend the last days at home in learning to cook, sew on buttons, and mend stockings. The only explanation he offered the astonished youth was this:

"You will think, perhaps, that such a lesson would be more fit for one who was coming into a Cook's shop, than a Conveyancer's chambers—but when you have been here a year or two you will probably be of a different opinion."³⁴

In the summer of 1785 Frank went into chambers with his uncle in order to learn conveyancing and at the same time be under the immediate care of his guardian. After a period of five years or more he returned to the vicinity of Stockton to enter upon business for himself. It was at this time that, like Ritson before him, he felt the need of further legal training, and asked his uncle's advice on the question of studying for the bar. Ritson's reply is curious. There is something in it of the eccentricity which marked his views on politics, religion, and literature. He sneers at his office, berates and maligns attorneys, and at the same time vigorously urges his nephew to become an attorney and perhaps seek an office like his own. He writes:

"Wolley's reflection on your proposal of drawing under the bar is certainly just: 'I have experience of it myself': and can assure you that if it had not been for that little dirty place in the Savoy, I should most probably at this moment have been either in a jail, an attorney's office, or stationer's shop: and it would be hard to say which of these situations is the worst. Five years are nothing in competition with the prospect you will have of establishing yourself in a useful and lucrative business at the end of the term: whereas you might be drudging whether under or above the bar for ten times that long, without a hope of ever being worth a farthing. . . . In a word you had much better hang yourself at once than begin to draw under the bar. If you do not immediately accept Wolley's offer [to study for the bar] you may resign yourself to everlasting damnation, as there will not be a chance left for your doing well."³⁵

Ritson believed in and insisted upon thorough preparation for every task. This was one of the constantly recurring points in his literary criticism, and he placed equal emphasis upon it in business. When Frank determined to follow the advice of his friends, he did not wish to spend the full five years in terms; so he submitted to his uncle his plans for "saving two years". Ritson, satisfied that there was no royal road to the bar, addressed him thus:

"The ingenious expedient by which you intend to save two years is perfectly

³⁴*Ibid.*, I, p. 104.

³⁵*Ibid.*, II, p. 22.

well calculated to lose five. In a word, your time would be thrown away, and yourself (most probably) put in the pillory. Nothing will do short of actual service for five complete years under articles."³⁶

Even after Frank had entered upon his service with Wolley, Ritson kept a watchful eye on him. The young man had interests of his own aside from legal study, and spent much time and thought on them. Ritson had no respect for the man who used his employer's time to further his own private ends, however laudable they might be in themselves. Just as he had no sympathy with sinecurism in any form, so was he outspoken against the individual who would not gain a livelihood by honest labor. There were two points upon which he placed great emphasis and which he constantly reiterated to Frank: give your employers full satisfaction; acquire a competency. In the following extract they are expressed with characteristic precision:

"After all, I would recommend it to you, as a friend, to lay your politics and philosophy upon the shelf, for a few years at least; their temporary absence will do you no harm, and their perpetual presence can do you no good. Your first and principal (if not sole) object should be, by a sedulous and unremitting attention to business, to do justice to your employers and acquire the means of an honest independency."³⁷

Ritson was very anxious that Frank should avoid the pitfalls into which he himself had unwittingly stumbled. He frequently confessed his own faults in order the better to impress his advice upon his nephew. He realized that he was eccentric, that his peculiarities of diet, of belief, of manner, hindered his progress. But while he recognized the handicap under which his eccentricities placed him, he seemed utterly impotent to escape from it. There is remarkable self-revelation in this admonition:

"You must be content, for the present, to lay most of your peculiarities upon the shelf: you make a *g* like a *p* which is abominable. Avoid as much as possible all appearance of singularity or affectation, and while you are a man of business endeavor to be nothing else: I have learned the value of this piece of advice by dear-bought experience; and experience generally both costs too much and comes too late to be of service to the purchaser."³⁸

With Frank and with other friends, especially Rowntree and Wadson, Ritson frequently exchanged opinions on matters of professional interest. Being in London he was often asked by his provincial correspondents to look up references or to cite the law in cases in which they

³⁶*Ibid.*, II, p. 25.

³⁷*Ibid.*, II, p. 40.

³⁸*Ibid.*, II, p. 167.

were interested. These errands he was always willing to do, but his liberality was imposed upon, and he was often asked to perform for nothing services for which his friends were paid when the results of his labors were given to their clients. Ritson himself never hesitated to ask for assistance in his various undertakings, but he always offered and expected to pay for it, either in cash or in kind. While he seldom displayed sufficient resoluteness of spirit to refuse a favor to a friend, he occasionally remonstrated against unfair requests. Rowntree was the most frequent object of his sarcasm. At one time he wrote:

"I shall make you the usual charge for the deeds and surrender, as I take your client to be like yourself—a very honest man—who could not wish that any person should give up his time and trouble for nothing. That is not your plan, Master? No, no. You'll take care to do very well for yourself, I dare say, whatever you do for your clients."³⁹

Ritson's utter lack of business ability is shown in his woeful inconsistency in pecuniary transactions. In handling another's money he was scrupulously exact and careful in the smallest detail. Even though his record of accounts was purely mental, he paid to it that attention requisite to insure full justice to his client, and if he erred, it was always on the side of generosity. Besides controlling his nephew's annuity, he frequently had the task of administering book funds for his friends. However incompetent he may have been in other business transactions, he knew the value of an ancient volume and prided himself on his ability to drive a bargain with the booksellers.

But when the money was his own, Ritson was careless to the point of indifference and generous to the point of recklessness. If there was a purchase to be made, he did not know how much should be paid; if he had something to sell, he depended upon the judgment of friends as to its value. This placed him at the mercy of less scrupulous men, who not infrequently took advantage of him in business transactions. Though he occasionally realized that he was being cheated, he seldom did more than enter some such mild protest as this:

"It ran in my mind that I was to pay you forty pounds *for the whole kitty*: if, however, as I collect from your letter, the sum was ten pounds more, I can only say that I have brewed a pretty kettle of fish, and brought my hogs to a fair market. As writing seems to be attended with some difficulty if not uneasiness, you have only to put down a figure of 4 or 5 before a cypher to satisfy me of the verity of the matter: a nod, you know, is as good as a wink to a blind horse."⁴⁰

³⁹*Ibid.*, I, p. 114.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, II, p. 10.

The difficulty was that Ritson paid too much attention to what he owed others, and others too little attention to what they owed him. And because he knew more about his debts to others than their obligations to him, he never possessed a clear notion of his pecuniary status. He was continually calling upon his friends for statements of account that he might know where he stood. In 1794 he sent this pathetic appeal to Wadeson:

"I am not poorer than I used to be, but my money, as they say, is neither here nor there. Besides, I want to put my little affairs in order that I may live, if I am to live, or at least die, in comfort."⁴¹

He frequently resolved to be systematic in his business affairs, but the resolve never became more than a good intention. He wrote to Rowntree:

"I mean in future to pay more attention to the arrangement of my pecuniary matters than I have hitherto done. With half your economy I might at this moment have had a thousand pounds in the funds."⁴²

Such loose methods led inevitably to difficulties, and he quarreled over money matters with old friends, with publishers, and with booksellers. Money was a very inconstant factor in Ritson's life. Aside from his small salary, he had as income only the proceeds from a limited business and the occasional small royalty from a book. His living expenses were almost negligible, but he spent large sums for books for his library, laid out considerable amounts in printing his own volumes, made clandestine "loans" to needy relatives,⁴³ and obliged impecunious friends until he was almost constantly in want. When he had money he loaned it to any one who asked for it, and expected, in his turn, to be able to borrow as easily when in need. That his creditors failed to meet their obligations and that his friends occasionally refused to respond to his appeals were matters of surprise to no one but himself. The greater caution exercised by others he sometimes misconstrued as antagonism to his interests. He was almost constantly in a state of ill health and used to plead his bodily infirmities as an excuse for his business laxity. Nevertheless he was frequently involved in disagreeable altercations with his most intimate friends, some of which led to serious results. The outstanding example is his misunderstanding with Rowntree, a life-long friend with whom he had borrowed and loaned promiscuously for many years and to whom he once said:

"My good sir, I have hitherto had no account to keep with you and whether

⁴¹*Ibid.*, II, p. 61.

⁴²*Ibid.*, I, p. 157.

⁴³*Ibid.*, II, p. 244.

I keep one or not—that is a subject upon which I dare venture to say no dispute will ever happen between you and me.”⁴⁴

But the dispute came and with it the disruption of a long friendship and the almost total severance of close connections with Stockton.

Early in 1791 Ritson asked Rowntree for the loan of one hundred pounds, and receiving no answer construed the silence as a dislike on his friend's part to accommodate him. When Rowntree explained his failure to reply as due to other causes, Ritson apologized for the false interpretation he had given it. His apprehensions he describes as,

“false appearances which a gloomy fretfulness in my disposition magnified into clouds that threatened the sun of your friendship with utter darkness, though the sky being now cleared, I find it to burn as bright as ever.”⁴⁵

But this did not satisfy Rowntree, who played the rôle of “injured innocence” and represented himself as deeply wounded by Ritson's lapse of faith. To this one-sided view of the matter Ritson eloquently replied:

“You will do great injustice to my feelings to suppose that all the uneasiness experienced upon this disagreeable occasion has been confined to yourself. My mind and spirits have sustained a shock of which it will not be easy for me to get the better. I am arrived at a time of life when the interruption of a much shorter acquaintance than ours is more to be dreaded than any friendship is to be courted: and the confidence that nothing of this kind would ever take place between us has rendered the disappointment inexpressibly severe. What can I say? I shall endeavor to forget everything that has passed, and to regain the favorable opinion I entertained of your friendship on the 31st of December, 1790. I am not fond of professions and have long ceased to express myself with either advantage or ease. But the intimacy of a dozen years must, I am persuaded, have convinced you of the esteem and sincerity with which I have been your truly faithful and affectionate friend.”⁴⁶

Again Rowntree refused to accept Ritson's statements at their face value and seemed secretly desirous of terminating the friendship. They continued an intermittent correspondence, but Ritson's letters are more formal and more distant, though as sincere and straightforward as of old. Writing to Wadeson some months later he dismissed the incident, and gave a characteristic interpretation of Rowntree's position.

“You, my good friend, are a man of feeling: as to my part, it is no longer in the power of Elegy to make me cry, or (which I think much more lamentable) of Epigram to make me laugh. I should, however, without consulting Mr. Shen-

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, I, p. 158.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, I, p. 183.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, I, p. 200.

stone, be very unhappy to lose the friendship of a man I esteemed; but when esteem is once destroyed, what is the value of either the friendship or the man? Rowntree, to be sure, is a very clever as well as a very useful fellow, and was not, perhaps, to blame that I placed more confidence in his sincerity than it was able to bear. One should have some sort of a mental thermometer to ascertain the boiling and freezing points of a man's friendship. At least (to change my metaphor) it would be very important to know 'the sticking place' of the machine, lest by screwing too high you break it in pieces, or render it of no further use. My friend Rowntree's zeal might be up to the loan of fifty, or perhaps sixty, or even seventy pounds, but the mention of a hundred extinguished his fires and converted his hot water into cold ice. I am, therefore content to let him freeze."⁴⁷

In addition to the question of borrowing and lending money, there was another business matter which harassed Ritson greatly; this was his property. From an uncle he inherited "two or three small old houses" at Hartlepool and a little property in Great Strickland. During his early years in London he sold his small paternal inheritance in Stockton and purchased at auction a large house there. He seems to have been unfortunate in the character of his tenants for all these houses and was under the additional handicap of being so far removed from them as to be unable to give them any personal attention. At different times Rowntree, Wadson, and Ralph Hoar, all Stockton friends, acted as his agent, but none of them was successful in collecting rents. At first Ritson took their failure good-naturedly and made facetious reference to his "hopeful tenants" and to the stewardship of his agent:

"My Hartlepool estate, I fancy, is sunk into the earth, or the houses are empty, or the tenant insolvent. Render up an account of thy stewardship, thou—just steward."⁴⁸

But his attitude soon changed. The constant trouble which the property gave and the urgent need for money in London caused him to resolve upon selling everything. But in executing this wish his agents were no more successful than in gathering rentals. Failing to dispose of the property for what he had been led to believe it was worth and being involved more and more in pecuniary straits, he finally in desperation commissioned his agents to sell "for anything that can be got". But even this blanket charge was not effective. The property was never sold, but it was finally swept from him.

Incompetent as he was in handling money, Ritson occasionally dabbled in the Stock Exchange whenever his funds for the moment permitted it. He always depended on the advice of friends, and he nearly

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, I, p. 211.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, I, p. 65.

always made bad investments. His earliest recorded venture on 'Change is thus explained in a letter to Harrison:

"As you allowed me to suit my convenience with regard to the payment of your draught, I shall take the liberty to defer it till I leave town, having turned stock-jobber and disabled myself by buying into the funds. I shall be a loser of ten pounds by this business; so that you must never say I bargain like a tradesman."⁴⁹

His last move was totally disastrous. A friend in whom he had great confidence induced him "in hope and flattery, to speculate with all the money I had or was able to get". As a consequence of the mismanagement of his friend combined with the sudden peace which terminated the French-English difficulties in 1803, he was utterly ruined, his loss being "considerably above one thousand pounds". All his property and a part of his library went to satisfy his creditors, and then he began borrowing money for another investment in which he hoped to retrieve his losses "when the price of consols fall to nothing in consequence of the expected French invasion".⁵⁰

As a business man Ritson exhibited the proverbial inability of genius to meet the practical requirements of a work-a-day world. But with all his imperfections he was a man of high principles and good intentions. His business creed, as expounded in suggestions to his nephew, is one of sound integrity. He lacked tact, however, in executing it and too frequently exceeded or fell short of the requirements of the case. His code of professional ethics was just as uncompromising. He not only believed that the guilty man should have no hired defense at the bar of justice, but he felt that no honest man would go to court with an unjust cause. He remarked on one occasion:

"I do not think that man honest who would avail himself of a quirk of law to obtain what in reason and justice he can possibly have no right to."⁵¹

Thus far many men of his own profession would agree with him, at least in theory. Ritson did not stop here; he had the courage of his convictions. In all his professional and business dealings he was guided by one principle—that of honesty. His opinions once formed, nothing could

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, II, p. 18. Nicolas commends Ritson for "his avowed detestation of every species of gambling." (Op. Cit., p. lxi) But he does not seem to have been so circumspect in action as this praise would lead one to suppose him.

⁵⁰*Letters*, II, p. 246. This investment was fortunately never made. As it was, more than £500, in addition to his books, was required to liquidate Ritson's indebtedness.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, I, p. 71.

induce him to act contrary to his convictions. He was always willing to hear arguments in favor of a different line of conduct, but these he invariably referred back to his touchstone of honesty, where, if they failed in the test, they were rejected.

The absurd lengths to which he went in pursuance of his policy are illustrated in the following anecdotes related by Surtees.

"He chose to exercise his judgment and his sturdy morality on questions which a less scrupulous lawyer would have left to his client to settle with his own conscience. For instance, having made up his mind that the Duke of Athol had already been sufficiently remunerated for ceding his rights in the Isle of Man, he refused all the solicitations of his friend, Frances Russel, Esq., Solicitor to the Board of Control, to induce him to draw the draft of a petition to Parliament, for the further recompense which the Duke afterwards received. The argument, 'if you do not, another will', had no effect on Ritson, nor would he ever set cheerily to work, without being perfectly satisfied of the strict propriety of the business in which he was engaged. As a somewhat ludicrous instance, he steadily refused to draw the draft of Jonas Hanway's Bill for the Incorporation of the Chimney-Sweepers."⁵²

But Ritson's influence was not wholly negative in this regard. At least one instance is reported of his having successfully exerted himself to drive out of office a man who openly defied the law. As High Bailiff of the Savoy Ritson was associated with Reeves, the notorious leader of the association for encouragement of spies and informers, and for the suppression of freedom of writing and speaking upon political topics. Although Reeves was High Steward of the Savoy, and as such his superior officer, Ritson lost no opportunity to discredit him because of his political conduct. When Reeves resigned his position, it was Ritson's belief that he, by his continued hostility, had driven his superior from office.⁵³

But with all his peculiarities of habit and opinion and in spite of his contempt for the law, Ritson met with more than mediocre success in the profession. Had he devoted himself unreservedly to it, his talents, his inflexible integrity, and his high professional character must have led to wealth and renown. His few law tracts give him a worthy place among the respected illustrators of legal antiquities; more attention to work of this sort would have been deeply appreciated by a relatively small but select group of his colleagues. He was content, however, to use the law as a means to other ends, and to draw his business from such clients as came to him unsolicited. A small circle of friends furnished

⁵²Robert Surtees, *The History and Antiquities of the County Palatine of Durham*, London, 1816-40. Vol. III, p. 193, note i.

⁵³See "Memoir of Ritson" in *Monthly Magazine*, Nov., 1803.

sufficient work to enable him to eke out a moderate private income, and to devote the bulk of his time to studies more congenial to his taste.

Sir Walter Scott is reported to have said of Ritson:

"he had an honesty of principle about him, which, if it went to ridiculous extremes, was still respectable from the soundness of the foundation. I don't believe the world could have made Ritson say the thing he did not think."⁵⁴

The fundamental identity of Ritson the professional man with Ritson the critic of letters is apparent when it is recognized that Scott's statement, made with the literary antiquarian in mind, applies with equal force to the Barrister-at-law.

⁵⁴Robert Chambers, *The Book of Days*, London, 1869. Vol. II, p. 406.

CHAPTER III

LITERARY BEGINNINGS; THE WARTON CONTROVERSY

Reads in British Museum Library—Collects material for Allan—Goes to Oxford—Contributes to Gough's *British Topography*—Visits Cambridge—Meets Farmer—Has part in the revival of interest in antiquarianism—Publishes *Descent of the Crown*—Prepares a number of manuscripts of local antiquarian interest—Turns to literature—Williams's *Odes*—*The Stockton Jubilee*—Prospectus of *Fabularum Romanensium Bibliotheca*—*Observations on the History of English Poetry*—Its nature—Critical reception—Effect upon Warton—Ritson's later attitude toward Warton—General estimate.

Ritson's first concern on arriving in London was undoubtedly to secure a place in a law firm where he might have a definite if meagre income and an opportunity to exercise his legal talents. This practical consideration disposed of to his satisfaction, his attention almost immediately turned to seek the means of satisfying his interest in literature and various antiquities. In this he relied upon the friendship of his Stockton acquaintance, George Allan, the famous antiquary. Shortly after his arrival in town he was introduced to the British Museum by Allan¹ and was soon recognized as an habitual visitor there. During the hours that could be spared from his legal duties in the office of Masterman and Lloyd he was usually to be found in the Museum poring over ancient documents and literary manuscripts then but little explored. He seems to have limited his recreation to the daily walk to and from the Museum, and this routine was varied so little that the slight figure clad in customary black hurrying along with uncertain gait soon became a familiar sight to frequenters of his line of travel.² This brief daily walk with an occasional vacation ramble into the country comprised his relaxation through life. His habits were formed early and rigidly adhered to.

Before he left Stockton Ritson's interest in local antiquities was effectually aroused, and he began a collection of curious papers regarding his native town. In this project he was encouraged and materially aided by Allan, whose kindness and generosity he was anxious to repay.³

¹See note by Allan's son in *Lit. Anec.*, VIII, p. 350.

²Robert Surtees, *Op. Cit.*, III. p. 195.

³See letter of Ritson to Allan, dated "Stockton, April 19, 1775", in *Lit. Anec.*, VIII. p. 350, note.

The opportunity to be of service to his friend came when he obtained access to the antiquarian stores in the British Museum. The earliest of Ritson's collected letters, written August 26, 1776, reveals him as already familiar with the antiquarian manuscripts of the Museum and as concerned chiefly with finding material relating to the ancient history of the county of Durham. The bits of information which he presented to Allan in this first letter and which he subsequently supplemented quite materially, were to be used by Allan in a *History of Durham* on which he was then engaged but which he later relinquished in favor of his friend William Hutchinson.⁴

Among the manuscripts, mentioned in this early letter, in which Ritson was searching for material concerning Durham, he speaks of the "ancient exemplar of the *Boldon Buke*" in the Bodleian Library, which "may contain perhaps many other articles equally valuable" but which he had not yet had an opportunity of consulting. An impelling desire to enlarge his acquaintance with antiquarian sources and a curiosity as to what was to be discovered about his native shire led him to visit the Bodleian and other libraries at Oxford as soon as opportunity presented. Toward the latter end of his vacation in 1779 he made a pedestrian excursion to Oxford⁵ and spent some time in the various libraries, where his success, he says, "though not altogether equal to my expectations was pretty reasonable".⁶ Besides the notes from the Boldon Book, of which he had already spoken, Ritson sent Allan copies of charters and registers concerning Durham and mentioned others which would be of great service "not only in stating the history of property, but in forming and correcting the descents of ancient families."⁷ On this same visit he extracted from the original register of

⁴Nicolas erroneously states (Op. Cit., p. xi) that this first letter "exhibits Ritson as . . . aiding Mr. Allan in collecting materials for a *History of Sherburn Hospital, in Durham*." This volume was published in 1771, five years before the letter was written. The material there mentioned was to be used in the *History of Durham* instead. Allan later abandoned his project in favor of William Hutchinson (1732-1814) who at his suggestion took up the work and under his direction and guidance published *The History and Antiquities of the County Palatine of Durham*, Newcastle, 1785-94. Allan modestly remarked that he furnished Hutchinson with a "variety of manuscripts and printed collections unarranged and undigested." *Lit. Anec.*, VI, p. 125.

⁵The diary of this journey, which is declared to be "no otherwise curious than as presenting the first evidence of his sceptical opinions" (Nicolas, Op. Cit., p. xv.), like that of the earlier trip to Edinburgh, although originally in the possession of Joseph Frank, is now unknown.

⁶*Letters*, I, p. 6.

⁷*Ibid.*, I, p. 7.

Richard de Kelawe, early bishop of Durham, two indentures in French, dated at Stockton, relating to the appointment of governors in the Bishopric of Durham. He sent an account of these entries to Richard Gough, (1735-1809), who gladly inserted it in the new edition of his *British Topography*, then preparing.⁸

Now that he was familiar, through five years intercourse, with the British Museum, and had been made acquainted with the Bodleian, Ritson's next objective was Cambridge. Through the generous offices of friends he had been enabled to borrow books and manuscripts from the University libraries for several years before he had an opportunity to visit them.⁹ On July 20, 1780, he set off for Cambridge, intending to spend a few weeks in this depository of ancient learning and then go further into the country for the remainder of the vacation. This plan was not fully carried out, for "momentous" business recalled him to London early in August. It was not, however, until after he had accomplished at least a part of his original purpose and had met with a singular stroke of good fortune in making the acquaintance of Richard Farmer, of whose friendship he was always proud to speak. He sums up the results of his visit thus:

"I saw a great many curious books, made a great many important discoveries: and what is better than all, became intimately acquainted with Dr. Farmer, whom I found a most sensible, liberal, benevolent and worthy man."¹⁰

The last quarter of the eighteenth century witnessed a remarkable revival of interest in antiquarian studies of all kinds. Various antiquarian societies were founded or rehabilitated during that period. The reconstituted Society of Antiquaries of London, chartered in 1751, was granted permanent quarters in Somerset House by George III in 1780. This acknowledgment that after years of probation the Society had proved its right to a place among the recognized British institutions was highly gratifying to those interested in furthering the study of antiquities. In 1780 also the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland was formed at Edinburgh to do for the north of Britain what the London Society was doing for the south. Two years later the Royal Irish Academy, which had existed intermittently since 1683, was reconsti-

⁸Richard Gough, *British Topography, or an historical account of what has been done for illustrating the Topographical Antiquities of Great Britain and Ireland*, 2nd edition, London, 1780, Vol. I, p. 337.

⁹Surtees, *Op. Cit.*, III, p. 193.

¹⁰*Letters*, I, p. 57.

tuted.¹¹ These were but the organized evidences of a widespread general interest in antiquities which was further revealed in various and increasingly numerous publications. Not only were there studies in coins, medals, and heraldry, which previously had engrossed the attention of antiquaries, but there was now searching investigation of the ancient historical records of the various topographical divisions of the kingdom, and of its ancient families and old institutions, to say nothing of purely literary researches.

Prominent among the members of the London Society of this period were the two men whose researches in non-literary antiquities Ritson was instrumental in aiding. George Allan published a number of volumes relating to Durham and Northumberland and was extremely generous and helpful to fellow antiquaries by printing at his private press, "The Grange", many expensive works, by throwing open his valuable library to other students, and by bequeathing to the Society of Antiquaries of London twenty-six quarto volumes of manuscript relating chiefly to the University of Oxford.¹² Richard Gough, described by a late contemporary as the Camden of modern times,¹³ produced a very valuable work in his *British Topography*, a much needed supplement to the antedated volumes of Rawlinson,¹⁴ Nicolson,¹⁵ and Gibson.¹⁶ Like Allan he spared no time or expense to preserve and publish the relics of antiquity. He presented to the Bodleian his manuscripts of topography "for the antiquaries' closet", and to Oxford his antiquarian literary collections "for the use of the Professor of Anglo-Saxon."

Ritson's published contribution to this renaissance of antiquarian interest was small. He made valuable and highly appreciated additions to the collections of both Allan and Gough. But the only volume of his own which indicates this type of study is a pamphlet of *Tables, Shewing*

¹¹The continental Societies did not come into existence till much later. See H. R. Steeves, *Learned Societies and English Literary Scholarship in Great Britain and the United States*, New York, 1913.

¹²The date of Allan's election as F. S. A. in the *Dict. Nat. Biog.* should be 1774 instead of 1744.

¹³Dibden in Nichols's *Typographical Antiquities of Great Britain*.

¹⁴Richard Rawlinson, *The English Topographer*, . . . by an impartial hand, London, 1720.

¹⁵William Nicolson published *The English Historical Library* in three parts, 1696-99; *The Scottish Historical Library*, 1702; and *The Irish Historical Library*, 1724.

¹⁶In 1605 Edmund Gibson published an English translation of Camden's *Britannia*, with the extensive assistance of a number of British scholars and antiquaries. The three foregoing publications represent the best work of this type in the century preceding Gough's *British Topography*.

the Descent of the Crown of England, only fifty copies of which were privately printed in 1778.¹⁷ This little work consists of three parts: Table I, showing "the true hereditary succession of the English crown from Egbert, the first Saxon monarch, to James VI of Scotland"; Table II, "the true hereditary succession from William the Conqueror (supposing a title in him by conquest)"; Table III, "the de facto succession from Edward Ironside." Besides their showing Ritson's political leaning at this time in his career, these compact and accurate tables reveal an early interest in the genealogical side of British history and the patience necessary to explore dry and dusty records of antiquity for the sake of presenting an accurate family tree.

Ritson's published antiquarian work, however, is but a small portion of the material collected and represents but a fraction of the time and energy expended in this interesting field. Not only did he formulate *Tables of the Descent of the Crown*, but he investigated the history of the ancient Northern families of Bailiol and Comyn and embodied the results in a manuscript which was never published.¹⁸ Not only did he furnish Gough with valuable additions for the second edition of his *Topography*, but he continued his researches after that edition was published and made numerous additions and corrections in his own copy.¹⁹ Not only did he assist Allan quite extensively in gathering material about Durham, but even before he left Stockton the attraction of the work proved so great that he began a collection of his own. When he began to explore the libraries in and about London, he made so many additions to his stock that he formed a definite design of printing a "Villare of the County, with useful appendixes". On February 13, 1780, he acquainted Allan with his project and ventured the hope that it would meet with his approbation and gain his assistance.²⁰ During the next two years Ritson continued to amass material through his own investigations and by the help of Allan, Harrison, and other friends in the county of Durham,²¹ but he published none of it. He soon came

¹⁷The second impression, with some slight alterations in phraseology, was printed in 1783. The tract is now extremely rare. See John Martin, *Bibliographical Catalogue of Privately Printed Books*, 2nd edition, London, 1854.

¹⁸Lot 967 of Ritson Library sale: "An enquiry into the connection between the families of Bailiol and Comyn in the thirteenth century."

¹⁹Lot 909 of Ritson Library sale: "Gough's *British Topography*, with MS. additions and corrections by Mr. Ritson . . . 2 vols., London, 1780."

²⁰*Letters*, I, p. 9. Ritson's project became generally known among antiquaries. Gough says (*Op. Cit.*, I, p. 340): "Mr. Joseph Ritson of Stockton has a small MS. collection relating to that place. He is likewise preparing materials for a villare of the county."

²¹*Letters*, I, pp. 36, 56, and *Lit. Anec.*, VIII, p. 133.

to have, in his own words, "so many irons in the fire and other fish to fry", that his attention was diverted from this particular field of antiquarian study to the more strictly literary. The bulk of his topographical material was comprised in a manuscript "Villare Dunelmense, the names of all the towns, villages, hamlets, castles, sea-houses, halls, granges, and other houses and buildings, having any appellation within the Bishopricks or county palatine of Durham." In addition there were two minor manuscripts which must have been prepared at this time: "Topographical Rines[sic]", and "A list of river names in Great Britain and Ireland, with a few etymological notes on them."²²

Some of the "other irons" which Ritson had in the fire at this time, 1780, were the duties of his new office as High Bailiff, the problem of gaining a livelihood by private practice, and, most absorbing of all, two or three literary projects. Although the major portion of his time was of necessity devoted to the law, his great desire was to have an abundance of leisure for literature, and especially for poetry. From his earliest years he was more interested in poetry than in anything else, but he was not yet able to devote himself to it in any great measure. His concern with local topographical antiquities was preliminary to an absorbing interest in poetical antiquities. His non-professional reading in London served to whet his appetite to such a degree that he soon abandoned all interests outside the requirements of his profession, except poetry. To poetry and the various antiquarian subjects growing out of its study he devoted his leisure from this time on. It was not until 1782 that he produced any noteworthy work in this field, but two earlier and minor publications deserve mention.

Haslewood states that in 1780 Ritson edited the second edition of *The Odes of Sir Charles Hanbury Williams*.²³ He gives this on the authority of Ritson's "own avowal to an intimate acquaintance" and adds that "his labor could not extend beyond collating the proof-sheets."²⁴ But Nicolas declares that Ritson's connection with the *Odes*

²²Now MS. Douce, 340, Bodleian. The other manuscripts seem to have been lost or destroyed since the Ritson sale in 1803.

²³Sir Charles Hanbury Williams (1708-1759), courtier, diplomatist, and satirist, is noted for the licentiousness of his published works, consisting mostly of poetical satires, coarse ballads, and squibs. The original edition of *The Odes* appeared in 1763 as *A Collection of Poems. Principally consisting of the most Celebrated Pieces of Sir Charles Hanbury Williams, Kt. of the Bath*. A fairly complete edition of Williams appeared in three volumes in 1822 as *The Works of the Right Honorable Sir Charles Hanbury Williams, K.B., from the originals in the possession of his Grandson, the Right Honorable the Earl of Essex, with notes by Horace Walpole, Earl of Oxford*.

²⁴Haslewood, Op. Cit., p. 5.

"is denied by his nephew and executor, and is rendered extremely unlikely by the disgust which Ritson always expressed at licentious poetry."²⁵ Despite this denial by the person who is in the best position to know the facts, Sir Sidney Lee, in writing the life of Ritson in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, relies upon Haslewood in stating that Ritson "is said to have edited a second edition of the scurrilous *Odes of Sir Charles Hanbury Williams*"; and Thomas Seccombe, in the life of Williams, says that the *Odes* was "edited by J. Ritson in 1775."²⁶ There would seem, then, to be ground for difference of opinion although no facts but only assertions have thus far been given.

There is no internal evidence on which to base a decision; the little volume comprising the second edition of the *Odes* contains no preface or introduction, and there are only two or three inconsequential notes. In the complete absence of editorial matter the case seems to resolve itself into a question of the word of Haslewood and the unnamed "intimate acquaintance" against that of Nicolas and the "nephew and executor", with a slight balance in favor of the former because of the statements of Lee and Seccombe. But a more exhaustive study of the situation reveals a preponderance of evidence on the other side.

The statement of Joseph Frank deserves careful consideration from his long and intimate association with Ritson and consequent knowledge of his various activities. Furthermore, no contemporary mention is made of Ritson's connection with the *Odes*.²⁷ Nicolas's personal reason for denying this work to Ritson—his aversion to licentious poetry—though based on Ritson's own words, should not be given too great weight, for it must be remembered that moral standards vary with different periods and that what was considered "licentious" in 1833 might not have been so viewed half a century earlier. It is true that Ritson boasted of excluding from his collection of *English Songs*, 1783, every verse that might bring a blush to the cheek of innocence²⁸ but it is equally true that in other volumes he included material quite as coarse and indecent as any passage in the *Odes*.²⁹ The most nearly con-

²⁵Nicolas, *Op. Cit.*, p. xvi, note.

²⁶Seccombe evidently does not mean that the volume was printed in 1775, for he adds in parentheses the dates of publication: "(London, 1780, 12mo.; 1784, 12 mo.)". If he means that Ritson's "editing" was done in 1775, that seems highly improbable from the early date, from the five year period before publication, and from the fact that the volume contains no editorial matter whatever.

²⁷In itself this would, of course, not be strong evidence, as the contemporary lists of Ritson's works are frequently inaccurate or incomplete.

²⁸See the Preface.

²⁹See *Observations on Warton*, etc., *passim*, and prefatory essay to *Ancient English Metrical Romances*. It should be borne in mind that the *Odes* does not

clusive argument against Ritson's editing the *Odes* is the ignorance of Williams and his poems which he exhibits—an ignorance quite unexpected in an editor who, everywhere else, insisted upon a thorough knowledge of the subject in hand or an explicit confession of imperfect acquaintance with it.

In 1783 Ritson printed in *English Songs* "Martialis Epigramma" as "by Sir Charles Hanbury Williams?"³⁰ This piece is included in the 1780 edition of the *Odes* without any question as to its authenticity. Ten years later, in the advertisement to the first volume of *English Anthology*, Ritson made an earnest appeal for the dates of the birth and death of a number of poets—among them Sir Charles Hanbury Williams—, "in order that the selections from those poets may be duly arranged." The second volume, which appeared the following year, contained two of Williams's odes ("On the death of Matzel" and "On Miss Harriet Hanbury"), both of which are included in the 1780 edition of *Odes*; but the dates of Williams had not yet been determined, a footnote reading: "Born 1 . . .; dyed 17 . . ."³¹ These examples of unfamiliarity with Williams and his verses, taken with the other facts, seem sufficiently conclusive evidence that Ritson did not edit the *Odes*.

In December, 1781, Ritson published anonymously at Newcastle, a piece of satiric humor entitled, *The Stockton Jubilee, or Shakspeare in all his Glory, A Choice Pageant for Christmas Holidays*.³² This "unwarrantable satire" consisted of extracts from Shakespeare applied to all the principal inhabitants of Stockton. Frank says the "characters were, generally, adapted with the most admirable precision."³³ At any rate the pamphlet seems to have aroused a storm of ill feeling in Stockton. Ritson attempted to conceal from most of his friends that he was its author, although to Ralph Hoar he is said to have entrusted the delivery of various copies to the Newcastle post office.³⁴ But he wrote to Wadeson an implicit acknowledgement of his connection with the

contain the worst of Williams. Although Carlyle spoke of him as "deep in that slop-pail or scandal-department of an extinct generation" (*History of Frederick the Great*, Centenary edition, London, 1898, Vol. V, p. 246.), and the *Quarterly Review* declared his *Collected Works* to contain "specimens of obscenity and blasphemy more horrible than we have before seen collected into one publication" (Vol. XXVIII, p. 47), yet these sweeping denunciations apply in varying degree to not more than half a dozen of the thirty-eight odes in the second edition.

³⁰*English Songs*, I, p. 238.

³¹*English Anthology*, II. p. 280.

³²As early as 1824 this volume was "extremely rare" and it is now practically extinct. There is no copy in the British Museum. See Haslewood, *Op. Cit.*, p. 5.

³³*Letters*, I, p. 38, note.

³⁴Nicolas, *Op. Cit.*, p. xvii.

work. He speaks of having heard "that a most impudent and malicious rascal has been libelling the all-accomplished inhabitants of Stockton in a twelfpenny pamphlet", refers to the treatment accorded Wadeson in it, and then asks if it is true that the scoundrel has been apprehended "and is to be publicly baited at the bull-ring?" But it was useless for him to attempt concealment in this fashion, for it is apparent that he was already suspected by many of his victims. In a postscript to this letter, he says, apropos of a possible visit to his friend:

"But, alas! I understand that my reappearance in Stockton Streets would cost me my life! Gods mercies! My good friend, you see what 'an' infernal world we live in."³⁵

Ritson's reading was, from the very first, largely in early printed books and old manuscripts. From historical antiquities he soon turned to poetry, romances, and literary origins. By the time he began to publish the results of his researches he had acquired an extensive acquaintance with the material of a little-known period in the history of English literature and had accumulated a valuable collection of early romances. His first projected work of importance to literary antiquarianism was, *Fabularum Romanensium Bibliotheca: a general catalogue of old romances, French, Italian, Spanish, and English*, to be published in two volumes. A specimen of two sheets of the work to be published under this title appeared in 1782, but the work itself was never printed. It is probable that Ritson found the project too ambitious at this early stage in his work with romances, or it may be that the material he intended to put into these volumes was absorbed by his other publications.³⁶

At this time Ritson had in hand another work to which he was devoting a great deal of painstaking research and on which he was bringing to bear all the information concerning the older periods of English poetry which he had been accumulating during his years of private reading and investigating in London. This was a criticism of Warton's *History of English Poetry*,³⁷ consisting of an enumeration of one hundred and sixteen errors of various degrees of importance, in that justly celebrated work. The first intimation of Ritson's concern

³⁵*Letters*, I. p. 38.

³⁶Since no manuscript of this description appeared in the catalogue of his library sale, it would seem that Ritson never progressed far in the actual preparation of this material for the press.

³⁷Thomas Warton, *History of English Poetry from the close of the eleventh to the commencement of the eighteenth century*. 3 vols., Oxford, 1774-1781.

with Warton is to be found in a letter to Harrison, written August 6, 1782. He says:

"I have at last put my libel upon Warton into the hands of a bookseller. It is in a fair way of seeing the light by Christmas."³⁸

The publisher's speed exceeded his expectations, however, and within two months there appeared anonymously: *Observations on the three first volumes of the History of English Poetry. In a familiar letter to the author.*³⁹

When Ritson undertook the criticism of Warton he possessed a wide familiarity with first sources in literature and history. His wonderfully retentive mind was stored with dates and other more or less isolated bits of information gleaned from neglected and forgotten books and manuscripts dealing with early poetry. He had the patience for extremely careful and accurate research after little things, and he had come to place so much importance on correctness in details that he unblushingly demanded absolute accuracy in every writer, no matter how broad his subject. The volumes of Warton's *History* he found to abound in errors of date and name and in inaccuracies of statement, all of which he deemed inexcusable. The *Observations* is a catalogue of some of these errors, noted in the order in which they occur. But this is not all. He employed the most personal, and what in his hands proved the most insolent, means possible for calling them to the attention of Warton—a "familiar letter to the author". His enthusiasm for precision led him into grievous excesses of language. He was unable to restrain his disgust at what he variously designated Warton's laxness, carelessness, ignorance, or dishonesty, in making the errors. As a consequence the volume contains an overabundance of virulence and vituperation. He exhibited an unexampled irascibility of temper and indulged in personal taunts and insulting abuse entirely uncalled for and absolutely indefensible. He missed no opportunity to sneer at Warton's religion, to impeach his motives, to question his sincerity, to taunt him with "ignorance" and "incompetence". There is a constant tendency to exaggeration and an inevitable overshooting of the mark. Some of his

³⁸*Letters*, I, p. 58. On October 8, 1782, Ritson again wrote to Harrison: "What say you to my scurrilous libel against Tom Warton?" *Ibid.*, I, p. 60.

³⁹Ritson printed the *Observations* "in the size of Mr. Warton's *History*" as "extremely proper to be bound up with that celebrated work, to which they will be found a very useful appendix." He was perfectly sincere in this statement, although his "affrontery" and "grim humor" in making it have been universally ridiculed.

statements are more indicative of the schoolboy than the serious critic. Such hyperboles as this are not infrequent:

"Cotgrave undoubtedly knew a thousand million times more on the matter than you can do."⁴⁰

It is Ritson's manner that is most frequently mentioned in connection with the *Observations*, and it has brought down upon him a perfect torrent of criticism, most of it justified. But his exaggerations, his spleen and ill-nature, indefensible as these are, do not comprise the whole of his work. Stripped of its abusive language there yet remains in the *Observations* a substantial body of criticism which is valuable in itself and for the wholesome influence which it exerted on future literary study.

After a prefatory address to Warton, in which he confesses that he may have occasionally indulged in too great warmth of expression but disavows personal motives, Ritson passes over the introductory Dissertations to the body of the *History*. His most frequent mention is of erroneous glosses in the medieval period. In this particular field Ritson was better prepared than Warton. He was at this time laying the foundation which enabled him later to publish a dozen volumes dealing with the poetry of the period and to furnish them with glossaries more accurate than had previously appeared. As a result of this study almost all of his emendations of Warton are correct.⁴¹ The few instances in which he is at fault⁴² only prove the necessity of allowing for human fallibility—a necessity which he refused to take into account when dealing with the works of others.

Warton's errors in glossing, Ritson almost always ascribed not to misunderstanding of the text but to lack of understanding of it. Upon "ignorance" in one thing and another he harped with ungracious constancy. He charged Warton with being ignorant of Anglo-Saxon,⁴³ of Italian,⁴⁴ of the early romances,⁴⁵ of English history.⁴⁶ In many cases he was correct; in others it would have been charitable to allow for typographical errors, for faulty information, or for the inevitability of mistakes in so large a publication. But Ritson had an eye single to accuracy, and he was slow to admit extenuating circumstances for error. When he did temper the violence of the charge it was usually to that

⁴⁰*Observations*, p. 7.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, pp. 6, 9, 11, 14, 16, 22, 23, 25, 30, 31, etc.

⁴²*Ibid.*, pp. 7, 17, 31, etc.

⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 25, 43.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 20, 35, 39, 42.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 17, 37.

of carelessness, and on this score he had ample opportunity to censure the historian. Judged by Ritson's standards Warton was undoubtedly careless. He was engaged on a gigantic undertaking, and it was not possible for him to devote to each minute point the personal attention and careful research which Ritson demanded. In the case of inaccessible manuscripts and rare books he relied on catalogues or the reports of friends. This failure to investigate original sources Ritson attributed to indolence, and in pointing out the anachronisms and inconsistencies into which Warton was often led by this habit he did much to correct the *History of English Poetry*.⁴⁷

Warton's failure to make personal investigation of all phases of his subject and his failure to keep exact notes of his reading caused him often to make vague allusions or indefinite references to books and manuscripts. In literary matters Ritson was a pretty thorough skeptic. He allowed the validity of no inference or conjecture until it had been substantiated by documentary evidence. When Warton failed of precision in his references, Ritson questioned his ever having seen the work alluded to. He doubted and even denied the existence of manuscripts which he had not himself seen and continued incredulous until convinced by ocular or other substantial proof. This skepticism sometimes placed him in ridiculous positions, but it proved to be not wholly a negative quality in the days of Chatterton, Rowley, Ireland, and their ilk; and Ritson was not in the least deceived by any of these clever forgers.

Ritson questioned Warton's sincerity in numerous instances in which he had detected errors of various sorts, but the most emphatic impeachment was of the Historian's motive in including material which to him seemed superfluous. Warton did fall easily into digression, and his side excursions were usually long. But there was no reason for deciding, as Ritson hastily did, that the digressions were introduced merely "to enhance the bulk and price of his writings". The critic was extremely vexed at the long dissertation, of ninety-seven pages, on the "*Gesta Romanorum*", prefixed to the third volume. This he called satirically, a "pretty reasonable assistant", asserting that it had no particular connection with the history of English poetry in the sixteenth century, but was inserted because "it serves to fill up the volume, and that's enough".⁴⁸ He likewise objected to the inclusion of foreign poets in this History, asserting that the digression on Dante⁴⁹ was injected as a space-filler. But here Ritson's failure to appreciate the value of

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 8, 15, 28, 36.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, p. 38. See also pp. 12, 33.

the comparative study of literature—which he came afterward to understand and to apply in his own criticisms⁵⁰—led him into the grievous error of attributing to Warton the habits of the meanest hack-writer.

Judging from the criticism it has aroused, the most serious of all Ritson's charges against Warton is that of plagiarism. One of his critical canons was that every literary debt must be specifically acknowledged, and he was scathing in denunciation of anyone who borrowed from another without giving due credit. He frequently detected unacknowledged borrowings in Warton and freely charged him with "stealing" and "pilfering". While the language of these notes is not in the least justifiable, there has never yet been a successful attempt to explain away the essence of Ritson's criticism—that Warton was guilty of plagiarism.⁵¹ And herein lies perhaps the most permanent value of the *Observations*. The bare corrections contained in this volume might have been given as a mere table of *Errata*, and they would have been given sooner or later and in much more gentlemanly fashion. But the force and virulence of Ritson's manner—the very thing that has been most consistently condemned—operated to place him in an advantageous position to enforce the principles of accuracy, care, and honesty which he championed. The knowledge that there was a keen and uncompromising critic ready to pounce upon editorial laxity and castigate the offender had a not inappreciable share in hastening the day of "modern" editing.⁵²

The *Observations* appeared early in October, 1782, and was almost immediately reviewed in the various magazines.⁵³ The comments of the reviewers are remarkably similar in character. All the writers naturally

⁵⁰See Chapter VII.

⁵¹Ritson charged Warton with copying a ballad from Percy's *Reliques* (*Observations*, p. 5), with "pilfering" Fawkes's notes to Douglas's *Description of May* (*Ibid.*, p. 24), and with taking from Steevens's *Shakspeare* an explanation of the *Hundred Merry Tales* as the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* (*Ibid.*, p. 43). Mant explains the first instance by saying that both Warton and Percy may have received their copies from a common hand (Richard Mant, *The Poetical Works of Thomas Warton*, Oxford, 1802. Vol. II, p. lxxviii.), but the others remain unexplained.

⁵²Instances of the effect of Ritson's criticism in insuring greater accuracy in Percy, Pinkerton, and others will appear in the course of the subsequent discussion. Previous to Ritson sporadic protests against inaccuracy, carelessness, and plagiarism had been made, but without noticeable effect. See H. G. Paul, *John Dennis; his life and criticism*, New York, 1911, p. 72.

⁵³*Critical Review*, Vol. LIV, p. 373; *Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. LII, p. 532; *Monthly Review*, Vol. LXVIII, p. 186; *London Review*, February, 1783; *European Magazine*, Vol. III, p. 126. Although the work was anonymous, there was little doubt as to who the author was.

devote most of their space to a condemnation of Ritson's ugly manner and say relatively little about the value of the material. They are unanimous in deprecating the ill nature, violence, and malignity of the "Observer". His abusive language is variously attributed to ignorance, malice, and insanity; and it must be said that some of the writers are almost as virulent with the critic as he was with Warton. But with all this denunciation, no one denies the extreme accuracy and justness of the criticisms when stripped of their violent language. In fact, everywhere it is admitted, though always hurriedly and frequently grudgingly, that the substance of the work is good, and is the result of the minute investigation of a scholar. And yet, it is sought to minimize this admission of the importance of the critic's contribution by saying that his productions are mere "gleanings", "the effect of a mind anxious about little things", and "affect the value of the *History of English Poetry* little if at all." Here undoubtedly began that hatred of the Reviewers as a class which Ritson nursed throughout the remainder of his life. For however violent the language of his own works might be, he never seemed to understand why anyone should be violent with him and seemed to feel that there was always justification for his own intemperance but never for that of another.

The formal reviews did not, however, mark the close of the discussion of Ritson and the *Observations*. The critic's strictures against Warton were too numerous and too serious to be left without an attempt at more extended refutation. Such an attempt was early undertaken and received its initial impulse from a letter in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for November, 1782, signed "Verax", and very plausibly attributed to Warton himself.⁵⁴ This communication proved to be the beginning⁵⁵ of an epistolary discussion that was continued in the columns of the *Gentleman's Magazine* during the whole of the following year.⁵⁶ After a dozen letters had been contributed, the editor declared that he "had sufficiently shown his impartiality in the controversy" and would now "beg leave to dismiss it." But whereas the editor may have been impartial, the Warton adherents among the contributors very greatly outnumbered the Ritson allies, only three of the letters defending the

⁵⁴On Nov. 3, 1782, Warton wrote to Nichols asking the "very singular favor" of the insertion of an enclosed letter "in this month's *Gentleman's Magazine*", urging the absolute necessity of so early an appearance, and enjoining strict secrecy in the whole transaction. See *Lit. Illust.*, IV, p. 739.

⁵⁵Warton's most recent biographer says that he was later "drawn into the controversy . . . and probably even contributed a letter himself". Clarissa Rinaker, *Thomas Warton; a biographical and critical study*, University of Illinois, 1916, p. 113.

⁵⁶See Vol. LII, pp. 527-8, 571-5; Vol. LIII, pp. 42-7, 126-7, 281-4, 416.

critic. It was literally true, as one of the correspondents remarked, that Warton had "unkennelled a pack of literary bloodhounds that seemed to hunt his less-friended antagonist to death." Among others the combatants included, on Warton's side, his brother Joseph, the Rev. Thomas Russell of New College, Oxford, and the Rev. John Bowle; and on Ritson's, the critic himself, and his friend John Baynes,⁵⁷ of Gray's Inn.

From a beginning in which the correspondents seriously tried to reestablish some of the points which Ritson had attacked, the controversy soon degenerated into personalities. The discussion was characterized by a good deal of violence, which caused the writers at times to lose sight of their subject and indulge in personal taunts and abusive flings at one another. Most of the correspondents played the rôle of advocates, and, holding briefs for their respective clients, they were blinded, wilfully or no, to whatever virtues the opponent might possess. The less frenzied of the controversialists acknowledged that Warton's errors deserved reprehension and admitted that Ritson displayed great learning and critical acumen in detecting them, though he was to be censured for presenting his material in an ungentlemanly manner. With these men the dispute centered mainly upon particular criticisms, among which the most prominent were Ritson's challenge to Warton to prove his statement that "anciently in England ladies were sheriffs of counties"⁵⁸ and his denial of the existence of such a person as Messen Jordi.⁵⁹ These and similar points were established by the contestants for both sides by the simple and obvious expedient of placing their own construction upon whatever evidence could be marshalled.

But Ritson's critics could make no great headway at answering his strictures against Warton and took up the easier task of censuring his method. In doing this they frequently indulged in language as intemperate as that they criticized. The logomachy was thus marked by the intemperance and violence, and often by the coarseness and scurrility, which characterized most of the literary controversies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Ritson was justly censured, on the grounds of common decency, for dragging obscene material⁶⁰ into his work. His eccentric spelling and altered grammatical distinctions⁶¹ have little other

⁵⁷John Baynes (1758-1787), special pleader of Gray's Inn, was a miscellaneous writer of some note. At his death he bequeathed to Ritson a very curious collection of old romances. See *Lit. Anec.*, VIII, pp. 113-115.

⁵⁸*Observations*, p. 10.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁶⁰Marlow's tenets, *Observations*, p. 40; Scoggin's jest, *Ibid.*, p. 20, note; etc.

⁶¹Eccentricities of spelling begun in the early *Versees* are enlarged upon here. The outstanding peculiarity of the orthography of *Observations* is the use

authority to support them than personal whim. He is unwarrantably vicious in many of his thrusts at Warton. But these violations of propriety are hardly sufficient justification for his opponents' falling into the very errors for which they reproached him. Their most flagrant and most persistently reiterated abuse is that of imputing to him motives of personal animosity. It is equally absurd to conjecture that he was "angry that a history of our poetry should have been undertaken by a scholar of polite taste and not by a "pedant"⁶² and to declare that the *Observations* was intended "to depreciate an individual and not benefit the public."⁶³ Ritson had no conceivable reason for personal enmity to Warton and consistently disavowed any such motive. It is only justice to take at their face value these words in the opening paragraph of *Observations*:

"Personal motives I cannot possibly have been influenced by, and utterly disavow. And were you able to falsify every charge I have here brought against you, whatever might be your severity, I should kiss the rod with resignation and even pleasure: as, I assure you, the satisfaction I should have experienced, in finding your work entirely free from error, would have been infinitely beyond any I can be supposed to feel, in thus making myself the public instrument of its detection."

The reviewer of the *Observations* in the *London Review* expressed the common judgment of most of Warton's friends when he said: "Mr. Warton, it is to be hoped, for the honor of literature, will think it infinitely beneath him to immortalize such a critic, even with a damnation". In effect Warton complied with this wish, and although his letter which precipitated the long discussion in the *Gentleman's Magazine* was a virtual reply to Ritson, he took no acknowledged notice of the critic. There is, however, difference of opinion as to the true effect of Ritson's attack upon Warton himself. Bishop Percy and Thomas Caldecott of New College, both friends of Warton, were of the opinion that Ritson's pamphlet caused him to abandon the *History* in its incomplete stage at the third volume.⁶⁴ Mant, author of the first Memoir of the Historian, declared that "an intimate friend of Mr. Warton has informed me, that he neither allowed the justness, nor felt, though he

of "hissself", "theirselves", etc., for "himself", "themselves", etc. Robert Lowth (1710-1787), in his *Short Introduction to English Grammar*, 2nd edition, 1786, p. 43, admits the use of such constructions, but nowhere uses them himself.

⁶²*Critical Review*, Vol. LIV, p. 373.

⁶³Ritson's *English Songs*, ed. Thos. Park, London, 1813. Preface, p. xxxviii, note.

⁶⁴Thomas Caldecott to Thomas Percy, March 21, 1803; and Percy to Caldecott, August 17, 1803, *Lit. Illust.*, VIII, p. 372.

might lament, the keenness of the censure."⁶⁵ Dr. Rinaker, Warton's latest biographer, suggests the distraction of his interest to other fields,⁶⁶ as the most plausible explanation of his neglect of the work. Warton's only personal remark occurs in a letter to George Steevens, who had just furnished him with some information about Ritson. There he declares that he "could disprove most of his [Ritson's] objections were it a matter of any consequence."⁶⁷ That he felt the censure more keenly than he cared to admit is evinced by the fact that this statement was written five days after he had dispatched to the *Gentleman's Magazine* the pseudonymous letter already cited, in which he attempted to reestablish many of the points Ritson had attacked.

If there is divided opinion as to the effect upon Warton of the *Observations* and the storm it aroused, there are equally divergent judgments on the question of the reaction upon Ritson. Haslewood asserts that Ritson afterwards became convinced of the unjustness of his attack on Warton, and "the reasoning of his frank friend, Mr. Park, drew from him an acknowledgement of his own impropriety, and induced him, at a later period, to buy up and destroy all the copies of the work that could be obtained."⁶⁸ Support is given this view by Ellis's confession that his anger at Ritson's attack on the *Historian* was mollified by the critic's repentance⁶⁹ and by Anderson's statement that he had heard Ritson speak of Warton "in a placable and penitential way."⁷⁰ Ritson's nephew, however, denied that his uncle ever repented, and Nicolas attributed the statement to "an amiable motive to extenuate the conduct of Ritson, which, nevertheless, fails because it happens to be without foundation."⁷¹ In view of these contradictions and in the want of evidence that Ritson ever went so far as to destroy the available copies of the book, the only opportunity to determine how sincere his repentance was—if indeed he did repent—lies in a review of his later allusions to Warton.

⁶⁵Mant, *Op. Cit.*, p. lxxvii.

⁶⁶*Op. Cit.*, p. 112.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*

⁶⁸Haslewood, *Op. Cit.*, p. 7.

⁶⁹George Ellis to Thomas Park, Sept. 27, 1799, quoted by Haslewood, *Op. Cit.*, p. 27, note.

⁷⁰Anderson to Percy, May 21, 1803, *Lit. Illust.*, VIII, p. 113. There is no evidence to support the view set forth in an unsigned article in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* that the storm of anger aroused by his criticism greatly delighted Ritson. See art. "Ritson".

⁷¹*Op. Cit.*, p. xxiii.

On hearing of Warton's death Ritson wrote to his friend Walker :

"Well! 'I war not with the dead', and shall treat his ashes with the reverence I ought possibly to have bestowed on his person. Unfortunately he is introduced, not always in the most serious or respectful manner, in a work which has been long printed, but which I think my book-seller does not choose to publish till both the editor and all his friends and enemies are buried in oblivion."⁷²

The work to which he refers, *Ancient Songs, from the time of King Henry III to the Revolution*, was printed in two volumes in 1787, but not published until 1792.⁷³ The material for these volumes was amassed at least three years before the Historian's death and at a time when the editor could have had no thought of that event. Though tardy, the expression of regret at his flippancy and disrespect is highly creditable to his character. Later editors of the *Ancient Songs*, evidently guided by Ritson's implicit wish, have omitted the allusions to Warton.⁷⁴

In the preface to his edition of *Poems . . . by Laurence Minot*, published in 1795, Ritson criticised Warton's handling of these poems in his *History*, and pointed out some errors which he ascribed to misjudgment and ignorance. The language employed is plain and direct, but in no wise meant to give offense. Although Ritson had not given over his antagonism to Warton's faults, his comments here lack the personal direction which was so objectionable in his earlier work, and he exhibits a manner which, compared with that of the *Observations*, may without the least danger of overpraise be characterized as "softened asperity and tempered virulence."⁷⁵

But the change of spirit which Ritson had manifested in his remarks on the death of Warton, in the preface to *Minot's Poems*, and in comments to friends, is not evident in his latest publications. After a period of editorial inactivity comprising seven years of severe illness which left his faculties impaired, he published *Ancient English Metrical Romances* and *Bibliographia Poetica*, in 1802. In both these works Ritson displays an acerbity of language which is not exceeded in the *Observations*. He devotes several pages of the introductory Essay in *Metrical Romances*

⁷²*Letters*, I, p. 169.

⁷³Ritson has several comments on Warton in his *English Songs and Remarks . . . on Shakspeare*, both published in 1783, but it is obvious that they will throw no light on the question in hand because those works were in preparation simultaneously with the *Observations* and he could not then have anticipated the full effect of that publication.

⁷⁴The most offensive notes occurred on pp. 37 and 286 of the original edition. The only reference to Warton in the second edition, 1829, is a very brief and eminently civil allusion, Vol. II, p. 233.

⁷⁵Mant, *Op. Cit.*, p. lxvii.

to a refutation of Warton's theory of the origin of romance, and overlooks no opening for a vicious personal thrust at Warton or a contemptuous sneer at the church which he served.⁷⁶ The comments on Warton and his *History* which appear in *Bibliographia Poetica* are much tempered and softened, but it seems that the want of extravagance in language was not the result of voluntary restraint on Ritson's part. The manuscript of this work was presented to Thomas Park for criticism, and he declares that he blotted out a "severe sarcasm against Warton's mendacious *History of English Poetry*, which Ritson forebore to reinstate."⁷⁷ Either on this or a previous occasion Ritson expressed to Park his regret for his disrespectful treatment of Warton, but he was never able wholly to give over his contempt for the Historian's laxness in handling material. It appears, then, from Ritson's correspondence and his private expressions to various friends that he realized he had overstepped the bounds of propriety in some of the notes in *Observations* and that, especially after Warton's death, he was genuinely repentant. For a time he sought to make amends in a negative fashion by publishing nothing virulent about Warton and even by commending his service to literature when he had occasion to mention the *History*. But all this is largely overbalanced by a return to the old violence and extravagance of statement in his last published works. The almost inevitable conclusion is that his hatred of Warton and the *History* was too deep-seated for any effective and thorough-going repentance to have been possible.

The great amount of discussion created by the publication of *Observations* is ample evidence that there was something more than sound and fury to that indictment of Warton. In spite of the fact that every effort was made to discredit Ritson and his work by emphasizing the indefensible coarseness of his manner and ignoring the kernel of his criticism, it was impossible to obscure the fact that he was a man of wide and accurate learning in the older periods of English poetry, a critic of keen perception, and a powerful antagonist. As such he became almost immediately known; but his most vulnerable point was always his vicious manner of writing, and an attack upon this too frequently diverted attention from the real value of his criticisms. The editors of Warton illustrate this fact.

Thomas Park planned to include the body of Ritson's notes in his edition of the *History of English Poetry*.⁷⁸ Although this project was never carried out, it appears from Park's comments on Ritson in his

⁷⁶*Anc. Eng. Met. Romances*, 2nd edition, 1884, Vol. I, p. 2, and *passim*.

⁷⁷Haselwood, *Op. Cit.*, p. 27.

⁷⁸See announcement of this projected edition in *Athenaeum*, Vol. V, p. 245.

edition of the latter's *English Songs*, that he would have manifested but little charity towards him. He concludes a rather severe arraignment of Ritson with a mention of his proposed edition of the *History* when "as an editorial advocate, it will become my province to rebut a regular indictment, comprising seventeen counts, against the veracity of our poetical historian."⁷⁹ Although we are deprived of this formal attack upon Ritson by Park's failure to edit Warton, there is an equally earnest attempt to discredit the critic in Richard Price's edition of the *History*.⁸⁰ Price used more than half of Ritson's notes in his edition, but this did not prevent his indulging in an extremely ill-natured and malicious attack upon the antiquary, in which he conjured up all his personal faults and individual foibles against him and said next to nothing of the material that really concerned the editor and student of Warton.⁸¹ Fairer treatment is accorded Ritson in the 1840 and 1874 editions of the *History*. The substantial body of his notes is included, and he is given credit for what he actually contributed toward a correct History of English Poetry, with no attempt to depreciate its importance by cataloguing the private sins for which he may be held accountable.

It has been contended that Ritson was not competent to judge the *History of English Poetry* because he did not know it as a whole but only saw it as so many separate minutiae. But Ritson did not attempt a criticism of the *History* on any comprehensive scale. His work was avowedly the detecting of errors of commission and the finding of faults, which, though minute, detract from the accuracy of a work and hence diminish its value for the careful student and conscientious reader. That Ritson succeeded in this task no one has denied. But many have been ignorant of, or have ignored, the fact that this and not something more ambitious was what he set out to accomplish. It is not the greatest type of criticism, perhaps not even great, but such as it is, it ought to be judged on its merits. It is task work that must be done, and at this particular time in the history of English literature it needed especially to be done.

⁷⁹Advertisement to Park's edition of *English Songs*, 1813.

⁸⁰*The History of English poetry By Thomas Warton A new edition carefully revised with numerous additional notes by the late Mr. Ritson. . . . and by the Editor [Richard Price]. 4 vols. London. 1824.*

⁸¹The unjustness of Price's treatment of Ritson was ably exposed by a writer in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. XCV, pp. 486-8.

CHAPTER IV

SHAKESPEARE CRITICISMS¹

Undertakes serious critical study of Shakespeare—His place in the changing attitude toward the dramatist—Publishes *Remarks*—Its general nature—Subsequent relations of Ritson and Steevens—Critical reception of *Remarks*—Publishes *Quip Modest*—Abuse of Reviewers and Steevens—Misunderstanding with Reed—Critical reception of *Quip Modest*—Publishes *Cursory Criticisms*—Violent attack on Reviewers and Malone—Malone's reply—Ritson's later attitude toward Malone—General theories of editing—Specific criticisms of Shakespeare—Appreciation of *Hamlet*—Plans an edition of the plays and poems—Publishes two pages of *Comedy of Errors*—The lost manuscripts—Conclusion.

Ritson's early years in London were filled with a number of literary interests. He did not allow his concern with Warton's *History* or with early romances to consume all his time. The earliest of his letters and all his publications reveal a wide familiarity with Shakespeare, to whose works he seems to have devoted a great deal of attention from the very first. *The Stockton Jubilee, or Shakspeare in all his Glory*, was a youthful display of Shakesperian knowledge for the edification of friends back in Stockton. But with increased maturity of thought and with the stimulus of enlarged reading he soon turned his study to more serious ends. The century in which he lived is replete with editors and critics of Shakespeare. The increasing volume of Shakespeare literature as the century advanced represents that growing interest in the old English writers and increasing familiarity with their works which we are told was one of the "beginnings of romanticism". This increasing interest was a complex growth. There are the bare mathematical facts of the increasing number of Shakespeare references and allusions in the literature and in the private correspondence of the century; the increasing frequency with which new editions appeared; and the rapidly growing army of annotators, commentators, and essayists. Then there is the less tangible but no less real fact of the changing attitude toward Shake-

¹The present chapter is an enlargement and revision of an article entitled, "Joseph Ritson and Some Eighteenth Century Editors of Shakespeare" which was published in *Shakespeare Studies*, By members of the Department of English of the University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1916, pp. 253-275. The material is here used with the permission of the Department of English.

speare; from a patronizing view of the dramatist as an inspired barbarian to a conception of him as the transcendent artist; from a blind and ignorant worship to a sane and serious study; from a heterogeneous hodge-podge of criticism to a common conception of the duties of the editor and critic. This evolution was gradual, but it was more rapid toward the close of the century than at the beginning. Some of the greatest and some of the least of England's literary men helped it along. To the lesser, oftentimes, was it given to correct the greater and to make straight the paths for feet more worthy to tread them. Among these minor agencies Ritson is to be classed. Although his chief claim to attention in the history of English letters must continue to rest upon the work with ballads and romances which is to be discussed in the succeeding chapters, yet he deserves more recognition than he has thus far received as a critic and emendator of Shakespeare. Unlike many of his contemporaries, he had a profound reverence for Shakespeare and considered him the great universal genius. He had a thorough knowledge of the original quartos and folios, which enabled him to detect textual mutilations and alterations. Through his influence these first texts received a more ample measure of the consideration due them at the hands of Shakespeare's editors. Ritson possessed ideas of editorship and a conception of the function of the critic which were in advance of his day, and by unremitting insistence upon them he helped to establish standards which are today recognized as inviolable. His own contributions to Shakespearean interpretation are by no means to be ignored. Most at home in the minutiae of textual correction, he was not devoid of an appreciation of the characters and the plays as a whole, and made many sound observations upon them.

To these qualities the personal equation added more in the case of Ritson than in that of perhaps any one of his contemporaries. The personal controversial flavor which was characteristic of the *Observations* is to be detected in almost equal degree in all his publications on Shakespeare. He often put Shakespeare in the background while he lashed Steevens or Dr. Johnson or Malone, or even Reed or Farmer. But he respected these men, and in his less heated moments invariably repented of his harsh treatment of them. Such conduct again brought down upon his head the scorn and ridicule of the reviewers. The *Reviews* may have killed Keats; they only galvanized Ritson into action and gave us one, and perhaps two, Shakespeare pamphlets we should not otherwise have had. Because the Shakespeare publications afforded Ritson a means of carrying on personal warfare and seemed, in some degree, set forth chiefly for that purpose, and because the body of criticism is substantially the same through all the volumes, it will be well to defer the consider-

ation of his contribution to Shakespearean knowledge until the chronology of his pamphlets has been traced.

Before the vigor of the discussion of his attack upon Warton had begun to wane, Ritson issued a second controversial volume entitled, *Remarks, Critical and Illustrative, on the Text and Notes of the Last Edition of Shakspeare*. It was directed against the Johnson and Steevens *Shakspeare* of 1778,² especially against Steevens, and the method pursued was substantially that followed in the Warton tract. In this volume, as in the earlier one, Ritson disavowed any personal motive in his remarks. He declared himself enlisted in "the cause of Shakspeare and truth", and called Shakespeare the God of his idolatry. But he recognized that "to controvert the opinions or disprove the assertions" of such men as Johnson, Steevens, Tyrwhitt, and Farmer, he must have some justification, especially where an undue warmth of expression was occasionally to be detected. In this, however, he considered that he was only exercising the right which these men before him had practised, and which it was the privilege of every man to exercise,—that of contradicting the opinions of his predecessors when they were thought or proved to be erroneous. But at the same time he was anxious to avoid the imputation of animus or of mean quibbling. In dealing with other men he declared he would "not be found to have expressed himself in a manner inconsistent with a due sense of obligations and the profoundest respect. Such, at least, was his intention, such has been his endeavor, and such is his hope."³

Of the 457 notes in the *Remarks* approximately half are concerned with textual emendations, the remainder with errors of judgment of Steevens and his fellow commentators. It was in notes of the latter type that the venom of Ritson's nature was exhibited. He frequently overstepped the bounds of literary propriety in ridiculing Steevens's "blunders", in questioning his motives, and in exposing his "ignorance". And yet there was underlying all this unscholarly manner a vein of pertinent criticism which struck home to Steevens.

Although the *Remarks* was published anonymously, Ritson made no effort to conceal the authorship,⁴ and Steevens knew almost immediately who was the author of the book and spread the information among his

²*The Plays of William Shakspeare, with the corrections and illustrations of various commentators; to which are added notes by S. Johnson and G. Steevens.* Second edition revised and augmented, 10 vols., London, 1778.

³*Remarks*, etc., Preface, p. viii.

⁴On going to press Ritson informed Harrison, who seemed to be a sort of Father Confessor for his literary life, of the nature of his new work and added boastfully, "I will turn the world upside down." *Letters*, I, p. 61.

friends.⁵ It was little to be expected that Steevens, whose insinuating abuse had already disposed of a brace of critical opponents, would let pass without some effort at refutation, a charge more serious against his literary reputation and more ably sustained than that of either Collins or Jennens.⁶ Under the signature of "Alciphron" he attacked the *Remarks* in a letter to the *St. James's Chronicle* for June 5, 1783.⁷ He dismissed the *Remarks* as trivial and insignificant, as treating not a single "important and shining passage of Shakspeare". Signing himself "Justice", Ritson replied the next week that the design of the "Remarker" had been to prove the late edition of Shakespeare "an execrable bad one; and this, I say, he has done".⁸ Such juvenile assertion and denial did nothing, of course, to establish the critical status of Ritson or his book; it served merely as means of escape for personal animus. When the edge of their rancor had grown dull, Steevens and Ritson continued on friendly terms. The editor kept the critic informed of his various undertakings and was from time to time supplied by him with interesting notes on Shakespeare.⁹

It was perhaps largely because of their continued correspondence that Ritson came eventually to feel that his published attack upon Steevens was quite unworthy of himself. More than a decade after its appearance he wrote to his nephew, who had undertaken to make some corrections in it:

"In behalf of the *Remarks* I have nothing to say. Indeed, I should think you much better employed in putting them into the fire, than in a vain attempt to

⁵See the following letters: George Steevens to Thos. Warton, April 16, 1783, in John Wooll's *Biographical Memoirs of Joseph Warton*, London, 1806, p. 398; John Bowle to Thos. Warton, May 18, 1783, *ibid.*, p. 402; M. Lort to Bishop Percy, May 19, 1783, *Lit. Illus.*, VIII, p. 457.

⁶In defense of Capell, John Collins (1748-1797) charged Steevens with plagiarism in a *Letter to George Hardinge, Esq. on the subject of a passage in Mr. Steevens' Preface to his impression of Shakspeare*. London, 1777. Steevens never forgave this attack and let slip no opportunity to hurl violent epithets at Collins, relating disparaging anecdotes concerning him, and fathering upon him a number of highly questionable notes in the 1778 *Shakspeare*. Charles Jennens (1700-1773) made a similar accusation against Steevens, and the editor, not without some foundation, sneered at him unmercifully, both in reviews and newspapers. See *Critical Review*, Vol. XXXIV, p. 475; XXXV, p. 230, and *Public Advertiser* for Jan. 26 and Feb. 14, 1771.

⁷Reprinted in *Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. LIII, p. 594.

⁸*St. James's Chronicle*, June 10, 1783. Reprinted in *Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. LIII, p. 595.

⁹See *Letters*, II, pp. 32, 123, 171, 193, and Advertisement to *Bibliographia Poetica*.

diminish the inaccuracies of such a mass of error, both typographical and authorial." ¹⁰

Ritson's final estimate of Steevens accords well with the judgment of posterity. As a commentator he recognized his rival as a man of acuteness and wit, whose arguments were "always ingenious and plausible, but not in every way convincing", but as an editor of Shakespeare he thought him deficient in true poetical feeling, and devoid of reverence for his author.

The Warton controversy had brought Ritson into a prominence not altogether enviable as a critic and antagonist, and the reception of the *Remarks* by the *Reviews* was largely influenced by the opinion previously formed by its author.¹¹ The minute accuracy in textual collations, the extensive learning displayed, the contributions to Shakespeare interpretation—all these were damned with faint praise as the reviewers hastened on to condemn the offensive assurance, the unwonted egotism, and the unparalleled violence of the author.¹² Using the methods which they condemned, they turned Ritson's own weapons upon himself and accused him of plagiarizing from the *Supplements* of Malone and Steevens¹³ material to correct their own faults. To the arch-enemy of plagiarists and editorial defaulters, this was a serious charge; and he hastened to enter his denial. In addition to Ritson's assertion that he "was not aware of being anticipated in more than a single instance", it appears from chronology that plagiarism was all but impossible. The *Remarks* was put to the press as early as the first week in October, 1782, and was published in the spring of 1783. Malone's *Second Supplement* appeared early in the same year, antedating Ritson's volume by only a few weeks at best. It is this work that contains the most of the "purloined" notes (the first supplement being largely taken up with the apocryphal plays)

¹⁰*Letters*, II, p. 123. Ritson seems never to have been wholly satisfied with the accuracy of the *Remarks* and found it necessary to publish two lists of *Errata*, mostly typographical. Yet he found a melancholy sort of pleasure in the conviction that his pamphlet was less inaccurate than the edition of Shakespeare which it criticized.

¹¹While the reviewers did not mention Ritson, since the volume was anonymous, yet they invariably connected this work with the *Observations* as the production of "Wartono Mastix" or the "modern Zoilus".

¹²See *Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. LIII, pp. 593-5; *Critical Review*, Vol. LVI, pp. 81-9; *Monthly Review*, Vol. LXX, pp. 334-8.

¹³*Supplement to the edition of Shakspeare's plays published in 1778 containing additional observations by several of the former commentators with notes by the editor [Malone] and others.* London, 1780. *A Second Appendix to Mr. Malone's Supplement containing additional observations by the editor of the Supplement.* London, 1783.

and it is obvious that Ritson could not have seen it in time to make any changes in his own publication. The logical conclusion is that the notes in question occurred simultaneously to Ritson and Malone (or Steevens), working independently.

While his own books were little praised and largely censured, Ritson frequently saw less accurate productions accorded unalloyed praise. It was impossible for him to understand why of two works, the one moderately correct but urbane in manner, the other flawless in fact but vituperative in tone, the less perfect should be the more highly commended. Quick to detect and anxious to punish any personal thrust at himself, he refused to grant to others the same privilege, and indeed seemed not to know when he had spoken so sharply as to give offense. He proclaimed himself enlisted in the cause of truth, and in her service he considered everything fair. If enthusiasm for his goddess sometimes betrayed him into ridiculous excesses and violent exaggerations, he either did not recognize it, or, recognizing, justified the means by the end. But his critics refused to take this view and largely ignored the truth of his writings while they condemned his manner. The reviewers seemed even to go out of their way to censure him. From this he came to believe that they were in league to destroy his literary character and grew to feel that he had a personal grievance with them.

When the tardy reviews of the third edition of the Johnson and Steevens *Shakspeare*¹⁴ appeared, they gave high praise to Reed, the editor, and sneered at Ritson as an "orthographic mutineer" and as a critic relegated him to the ranks of the "unimportant".¹⁵ This taunt of the reviewers came as an added insult to Ritson. Although more than two hundred notes from the *Remarks* had been adopted in Reed's edition, yet Ritson chose to consider himself very unjustly treated because some of his notes were omitted and a few were held up to biting and sarcastic ridicule. Being extremely sensitive about his own work, guarding it, as he said, as jealously as a father does his offspring, he felt it his duty "to defend every part of it from injury and misrepresentation", and declared that he knew of "no difference between the integrity or character of a writer and that of any other individual, nor ought an unjust charge against the former to remain unrefuted, any more than one against the latter."¹⁶ Thus stung to action he took up the notes he had

¹⁴*The Plays of William Shakspeare, in ten volumes. . . . to which are added notes by S. Johnson and G. Steevens. The third edition revised and augmented by the editor of Dodsley's Collection of Old Plays* [Isaac Reed]. London, 1785.

¹⁵*Critical Review*, Vol. LXII, pp. 321-9; Vol. LXXXVII, pp. 19-25.

¹⁶*Quip Modest*, Preface, p. v.

made "in turning over the revised edition immediately after its publication, but had lain aside and almost forgotten", and put them to press as, *The Quip Modest; a few words by way of Supplement to Remarks, Critical and Illustrative, on the Text and Notes of the Last Edition of Shakspeare; occasioned by a republication of that Edition, Revised and Augmented by the Editor of Dodsley's Old Plays*. As its title suggests, the substance of this little volume consists mainly of answers to the objections which had been made to the *Remarks*. The dozen new notes are about equally divided between textual emendations and corrected glosses.

The most interesting part of the book, however, and that which attracted immediate notice, is the Preface. In it he openly attacked the reviewers and Steevens, and by inuendo Reed himself. He heaped scorn and invective on "those very good Christians" his "liberal and candid friends", the reviewers. He accused them of "passing sentence upon books which they never read, and on the character of writers whom they do not know." In short, he was so violent in his strictures as to obscure, for his immediate readers at least, almost everything except the points of personal controversy.

Of Steevens's share in the 1785 *Shakspeare* Ritson had little definite information. The notes in which he considered himself disrespectfully treated were signed with the editor's initials, but he did not choose to think they came from Reed. On the contrary, he held that they were "furnished by some obliging friend, who had desired to be effectually concealed under the sanction of the editor's signature". That he believed this "obliging friend" to be Steevens is clear from the following comment which was a part of the original Preface:

"This worthy gentleman is probably the infamous scoundrel who published 'An address to the curious in ancient poetry,'¹⁷ as, however little relation it may have to Shakspeare, the author has had interest enough to procure it a place in the 'List of Detached Pieces of Criticism, etc.,' prefixed to the revised edition. A congeniality of disposition in the Critical Reviewers procured this fellow a different reception from these literary hangmen, from that which he may one day experience from a well-known practical professor of the same mystery."

After a few copies of the *Quip Modest* had been sold, Ritson came to feel, or more probably, was persuaded, that this note was "too strong for the person alluded to", and he stopped the sale of the work long enough

¹⁷A familiar address to the curious in English Poetry, more particularly to the readers of Shakspeare. By Thersites Literarius, London, 1784. This rather inconsequential tract was written in the first person as though it came from Ritson, and gave him great offense.

to cancel this page and substitute another bearing the following—perhaps ironical—statement:¹⁸

"Impressed as I have been with this idea, I ought in common justice to acknowledge that I suspect no one in particular to whom I am thus indebted. Above all I wish to declare, that the candor, liberality, and politeness which distinguish Mr. Steevens, utterly exclude *him* from every imputation of this nature."

Besides the disrespectful comments which he attributed to Steevens, there were three notes in the 1785 edition of Shakespeare at which Ritson was particularly offended, in which, to use his own words, "I found or imagined I was treated with contempt".¹⁹ These were: (1) In the *Remarks*, p. 12, Ritson had expressed the belief that "King Edward shovel boards", (*Merry Wives of Windsor*, I. i. 154) referred to "broad shillings of Edward III." and not of Edward VI, as Farmer had stated. An italicized note in the Reed *Shakspeare* castigated him for "censuring" Farmer, denied his assertion, and dismissed the note as "*not worth consideration*."²⁰ (2) After devoting a page and a half to Ritson's note on the mortality of fairies, (*Midsummer Night's Dream*, II. i. 101) the editor concluded thus:

"It is a misfortune as well to the commentators, as to the readers of Shakspeare, that so much of their time is obliged to be employed in explaining and contradicting conjectures and assertions. . . . A future editor of our author may without any detriment to his work omit this note, which I should have been better pleased to have had no occasion to incur the page with."²¹

(3) Upon Ritson's demanding that Dr. Johnson present some other proof than his own assertion that Shakespeare was guilty of an anachronism in introducing *rapier* into *Richard II.*, IV. i. 40, the editor remarked:

"It is probable that Dr. Johnson did not see the necessity of citing any authority for a fact so well known, or suspect that any person would demand one."²²

Upon reading these notes one wonders why Ritson should have been so wrought up as to feel that he had a personal quarrel with the man who wrote them. It is certain that imagination and a super-sensitive nature played a rather large part in exciting his anger. Outside

¹⁸Ritson was not yet far enough removed from his original quarrel with Steevens to treat him with the candor which he later displayed.

¹⁹*Letters*, I, p. 105.

²⁰Reed's *Shakspeare*, I, p. 253.

²¹*Ibid.*, III, p. 37.

²²*Ibid.*, V. p. 227.

of the two letters that have been preserved, the only explanation of his point of view is to be found in the *Quip Modest*. There he admitted that he was guilty of a "gross blunder" about "King Edward shovel boards", but he resented the statement that he had censured Farmer, for whom he professed the highest regard, and declared that he had only expressed a difference of opinion. In the discussion on the mortality of fairies Ritson knew he was in the right, and he steadfastly maintained his ground. It was the insinuating nature of this note to which he objected, and to the editor's parting fling he replied in his richest vein:

"The editor might, without any detriment to his work, have omitted the above note; but I cannot think that the *page* has any particular reason to complain of the incumbrance, as it would be no difficult matter to point out several hundreds groaning under an equal burthen".²³

In the last note Ritson was incensed at the notion that he should be criticized for insisting upon an editor or commentator performing his proper function—that of substantiating opinion with fact wherever possible.

Ritson immediately made known his dissatisfaction with these notes. He held much store by Reed's friendship and professed to believe that they came from some "friend in the dark", possibly Steevens, rather than from the ostensible editor. Hearing that Ritson had taken offense, Reed wrote him a very cordial letter expressing regret that anything in his work should tend to alienate a friend. But he nowhere denied having written the notes to which Ritson objected, and the general tenor of his letter implied that he was their author. Ritson replied that he had no desire to cause a disagreement, acknowledged the right of Reed and every other man to dispute his statements and point out his errors, but, he said, in homely illustration of his contention that there was a difference between "information" and "attack", that while he would thank any person for acquainting him that he had a hole in his stocking or some dirt on his face, he would not feel himself obliged if that person "accompanied the information with a kick on the shin or a box on the ear." At Reed's suggestion that a common friend be designated to act as arbitrator, Ritson turned the matter over to John Baynes and endeavored to dismiss it from his mind:

"I shall dwell no longer on a subject which I would have given one of my fingers had never existed, and which for my own sake I shall endeavor as soon as possible to forget."²⁴

²³*Quip Modest*, p. 14.

²⁴*Letters*, I, p. 107 ff.

There is no record of Baynes's activity, but at least he failed to bring the men to a mutual understanding.

When the *Quip Modest* was published this affair was in *status quo ante*. In the Preface Ritson expressly stated that he did not hold Reed responsible for the most offensive notes in the Shakespeare edition which "that respectable gentleman" had supervised, but added, alluding no doubt to the three notes which he was unable to forgive:

"However, I doubt not there are many things in the following pages which I might have been allowed to say, without running any possible risk of giving offense to him; alive as an editor is on such occasions said to feel himself."

Ritson was himself more "alive" than perhaps any other editor of his day, and yet he seemed utterly incapable of conceiving that others might take offense at what would invariably anger him if turned against his work. The offense given, he was prompt to apologize and to express regret at what he had done. But he did this on every occasion and seemed not to profit by the experience. Reed wrote immediately, disclaiming the authorship of the notes which had displeased Ritson and voicing his surprise that their friendship had not been proof against such a misconception. The critic's reasons for his conclusions and his sincere desire to avoid a break with his friend are eloquently set forth in the following letter to Reed:

Dear Sir,

I plainly perceive that the little pamphlet I have published will be productive of a consequence which it must be evident I have sought to avoid, & for which I shall be very sorry.

That I have often thought and said that the notes at which I have taken offense could not possibly proceed from you is a fact well known. I declared my belief of it to yourself in the letter I wrote soon after the publication of your *Shakspeare*; ²⁸—you could then, I thought, so easily have undeceived me, that your silence tended to authorize & confirm my belief. I cannot however doubt the assertion you now make—but I am more and more at a loss to account for the language and manner of your notes which so far as you were personally concerned were without the least provocation on my side and could not fail to give the most unfavorable impression of my character to every one who knew who was meant by the Author of the *Remarks*. It would surely have been generous and friendly at the least to have afforded me an opportunity of defending myself against the charges you thought me liable to, before the publication of the book, that I might have had a chance of convincing you that the *Remarks* objected to were neither so false nor so foolish as they were represented. You adopted a mode of conduct which it would have been perfectly natural for me to expect from Mr. Warton or Mr. Malone but certainly not from you.

²⁸See *Ibid.*, I, pp. 105-8.

I have no intention whatever of troubling the public with anything more upon the subject. My only wish was to justify myself which I hope I have done to the satisfaction of every unprejudiced person.

You will do me the justice to believe that I never entertained the most distant suspicion of your having any concern in the scurrilous libel you allude to²⁶—but both Baynes & I were very much surprised to see it noticed in your list²⁷ which we concluded it would not have been if you were unacquainted with its contents, & which it was equally difficult to conceive why it shod have been if you were not.

I should consider myself a person of neither honour or honesty if I had been actuated in this publication by the least spark of resentment against you & I beg leave to assure you that notwithstanding what has passed I shall still continue to preserve the respect and esteem to which your personal character & literary services have so just a claim.

I am,
Dear Sir,
Your very obliged & obed. serv.
J Ritson.

Grays Inn,
22d. Feb. 1788.²⁸

If Ritson really believed that his slurs would cause the reviewers to treat him with less familiarity, he was a poor judge of human nature. If, on the other hand, he was wilfully provoking them to further assaults that he might have justification for a counter attack, he accomplished his purpose. By the critical *Reviews* the work was treated in a half humorous manner as the inconsequential production of an eccentric critic.²⁹ This much Ritson might have expected, and it is possible to conceive that he might not have felt called upon to reply to it. But the attitude of conscious superiority assumed by the reviewers added insult to injury. This he might have expected too. It was what he had before objected to, and it was just the thing that harassed him most. In his view it was beyond the pale of human possibility for any one to judge fairly, after only a casual perusal, a book which had been months, and perhaps years, in preparation. The presumptuousness of the reviewers in doing this he was bound to expose. His opportunity came in the publication of Malone's *Shakspeare* in 1790.³⁰

After two years of preparation and delay, Ritson published a

²⁶*A familiar Address*, etc., cited above.

²⁷"A list of detached pieces of criticism", Reed's *Shakspeare*, Vol. I, pp. 261-6.

²⁸The MS. of this letter is in the library of Mr. Marsden J. Perry, Providence, Rhode Island.

²⁹*Critical Review*, Vol. LXV, p. 407; *Monthly Review*, Vol. LXXIX, p. 275.

³⁰*The Plays and Poems of William Shakspeare in ten volumes; collated verbatim with the most authentic copies*, etc. London, 1790.

pamphlet of one hundred and four pages, entitled, *Cursory Criticisms on the Edition of Shakspeare published by Edmond Malone*. He prefixed a bitterly acrimonious letter "To the Monthly and Critical Reviewers", for the purpose, he says,

"to induce you, before you pass sentence on the following pages, to read them through: '*Strike, but hear*.'" "I consider you", he cries, "as two formidable, and mischievous gangs of nocturnal banditti, or invisible footpads, equally cowardly and malignant, who attack where there can be no defense, and assassinate or destroy where you cannot plunder. Shakspeare's morality, in the hands of a Reviewer, is to be read backward, like a witch's prayer."³¹

With the gentle Malone himself, Ritson was only slightly less severe than with the reviewers. He undertook the work with an avowed purpose "to convict Malone, not to convince him". And he would convict him on the following counts: with "a total want of ear and judgment"; with "replacing all the gross and palpable blunders of the first folio"; with "deforming the text, and degrading the margin with intentional corruption, flagrant misrepresentation, malignant hypercriticism, and unexampled scurrility".

Ritson recognized that he was dealing in a high-handed manner with a worthy writer and felt the necessity of finding an excuse for the violence of his language. Malone had treated Ritson with scant respect in his edition, referring to him as a "shallow or half-informed remarker", and alluding to his "profound ignorance" and "crude notions". This Ritson considered ample justification for heaping upon the editor all manner of vilification and abuse—a course which he followed with more consistency in this than in either of the earlier volumes. Although this pamphlet was directly inscribed to the reviewers, it was almost neglected by them. They recognized when a controversy had degenerated beneath the dignity of gentlemen and dismissed Ritson and his billingsgate "without feeling one spark of resentment".³² But Malone had more at stake than the reviewers and was not willing to give over the contest so readily as they. A letter in the *St. James's Chronicle* for March 27, 1792, defending Malone, was probably written by himself. Magazine warfare had proved disastrous to Ritson, from the mere

³¹Cf. Dr. John Brown's characterization of the reviewers as "two notorious gangs of monthly and critical book-thieves hackneyed in the ways of wickedness, who, in the rage of hunger and malice, first plunder, and then abuse, maim, or murder, every honest author who is possessed of aught worth their carrying off; yet by skulking among other vermin in cellars and garrets, keep their persons tolerably well out of sight, and thus escape the hands of literary justice." *An Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times*. London, 1758. Vol. II, p. 75.

³²*Critical Review*, Ser. 2, Vol. IV, p. 476; *Monthly Review*, Vol. XCIII, p. 111.

superiority of the enemy's numbers if for no other reason, and he prudently refrained from replying to the letter. This article did not fully satisfy Malone's purpose, however, and the next month he published *A Letter to Richard Farmer, relative to the edition of Shakspeare, published in 1790, and some Criticisms on that work*, in which he vindicated his own care and industry, but failed to establish his reputation for metrical judgment.⁸³

It is to Ritson's credit that he made no public reply to Malone's letters. He did, however, write boastingly to his friend Robert Harrison, apropos of *Cursory Criticisms* and Malone's *Letter*:

"I flatter myself I have totally demolished the great Malone. He has attempted to answer it [*Cursory Criticisms*] by the most contemptible thing in nature."⁸⁴

But Ritson did not condemn everything that Malone wrote, nor was he always so sanguine of his success in "demolishing" him. He was far from insensible to Malone's merit, and he was not unwilling to give credit where credit was due. As in many other instances, when the heat of the contest had passed over, when his anger had had time to cool in thoughtful retrospection, he repented his rash act and sought in some way to make restitution. To his nephew, who followed blindly and doggedly in his footsteps, he wrote in 1796:

"You will do Mr. Malone a great injustice if you suppose him to be in all respects what I may have endeavored to represent him in some. In order that he may recover your more favorable opinion, let me recommend to your perusal, the discussion, in his *Prolegomena*, entitled 'Shakspeare, Ford, and Johnson', and his 'Dissertation on the three parts of King Henry Sixth' (to which I am more indebted for an acquaintance with the manner of our great dramatic poet than to any thing I ever read.)"⁸⁵

⁸³See James Prior, *The Life of Edmond Malone*, London, 1860, p. 185 ff.

⁸⁴*Letters*, I, p. 215.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, II, p. 122. In this same letter Ritson praised Malone's exposure of the Ireland forgeries in the following words: "His recent enquiries into the Shakspearian forgeries evinces, also, considerable industry and acuteness, and is certainly worth your reading. I do not mean to say that there was any difficulty in the subject; but it has certainly derived importance from the ignorant presumption and cullibility of certain literary aristocrats who have considerable influence upon what is called the public." From the very first Ritson maintained that Ireland's "discovery" was a forgery concocted since the publication of Malone's *Shakspeare* by some person "of genius and talents which ought to have been better employed." See *Letters*, II, pp. 75, 91-93, 140, 143, and *Lit. Illust.*, VII, p. 9. Ritson was one of the earliest visitors to the exhibit arranged by the elder Ireland on Norfolk Street, and the impostor himself later confessed that he had difficulty in maintaining the counterfeit during the interview. He writes: "The sharp physiognomy, the

It is stated, on the authority of Nicolas,³⁶ that Ritson carried out his repentance and made good his amend by buying up and destroying all the copies of *Cursory Criticisms* that remained in the hands of his publishers, but there is no support for this statement other than the extreme scarcity of the volume.

These three slight volumes constitute Ritson's Shakespearean publications. They are all very much alike. Each one is an attack upon an editor and his work; the author's manner is almost invariably overbearing if not insolent; and he exhibits more critical ability than good manners. But the contributions to Shakespeare knowledge are by no means inconsiderable. Of these pamphlets the first is the largest and the most important. The *Remarks* contains practically all of the notes that were of real value. *Quip Modest* and *Cursory Criticisms* have few new notes and are mainly taken up with a reconsideration of those already presented. Some of them were decidedly worth defending; others were unhandsomely revived by a supersensitive author whose feelings occasionally overpowered his judgment.

The results of Ritson's Shakespeare criticisms fall into two main divisions comparable to the double effect of the *Observations*. In the first place, there is the direct reaction upon the theory and practice of editing. Ritson insisted upon a few fundamental principles, and he reiterated them so vociferously in each succeeding publication that they were more carefully heeded by future editors. Secondly, there is in these three volumes a not inconsiderable body of valuable contributions to Shakespeare knowledge. These two divisions will be taken up in order.

In the Prefaces to these volumes is to be found the first explicit statement of some of the canons of criticism by which Ritson was always guided. "The chief and fundamental business of an editor", he declared at the outstart, "is carefully to collate the original and authentic editions of his author."³⁷ Although all the editors from Rowe to Malone pro-

piercing eye, and the silent scrutiny, of Mr. Ritson, filled me with a dread I had never before experienced. His questionings were laconic, but always to the purpose. No studied flow of words could draw him from his purpose; he was not to be hoodwinked; and after satisfying his curiosity, he departed from Mr. Samuel Ireland's house, without delivering any opinion, or committing himself in the smallest circumstance. In fine, I do as firmly believe that Mr. Ritson went away fully assured that the papers were spurious, as that I have existence at this moment." *The Confessions of William Henry Ireland*, etc., London, 1805, p. 227.

³⁶Op. Cit., p. liii.

³⁷For the quotations in this and the next paragraph see the Prefaces to *Remarks*, *Quip Modest*, and *Cursory Criticisms*.

fessed to have collated the old editions, Ritson maintained that no one of them had even compared the first two folios, "books indifferently common and quoted by everybody". Theobald had done more than any one else toward a careful collation of the quartos and folios, and him Ritson adjudged the best of the editors. He quarreled with Steevens for basing his text on the quartos, and with Malone for relying on the first folio. Some choice was necessary, he admitted. It was the privilege and the duty of the editor to choose one old text as a basis, but he ought to do this with a full and intimate knowledge of all the others. The folios, he maintained, were more reliable than the quartos, and of the folios the second was superior to the first. He went to great pains to assemble parallel passages from the folios to prove that Malone had, in the majority of cases, chosen the inferior reading. This point he had little difficulty in sustaining. But if Steevens was led into excesses and error by too close reliance on the quartos, and Malone on the first folio, Ritson, in his turn, exhibited the natural editorial tendency by too faithful adherence to his favorite text, the second folio. But Ritson knew both the quartos and the folios better than most of his contemporaries and from his wider knowledge was able to trace back with remarkable precision variant readings to their ultimate sources. He thus took from contemporary editors the honor for many "proposed emendations" and exerted a wholesome influence toward more careful textual collation. This influence is especially noticeable in Malone, although his unreasoning prejudice against the second folio prevented him from making his text as reliable as it might have been.³⁸

Eighteenth century editors generally had no exalted conception of the sacredness of an author's text. They deleted, altered, or enlarged wherever they thought necessary and took no particular pains to distinguish their own work from the original. With advanced ideas of editorship, Ritson declared it his belief that an author's text was his own property, sacred and inviolable, and not to be altered in the slightest save by his own hand. The question was never, what *should* an author have written, but what *did* he write? An editor ought never to feel under the necessity of apologizing for his author; he ought simply to give the text as he found it. It was the privilege of every editor to alter the text where he deemed it necessary, but it was also his duty to designate, by some means clearly intelligible to the reader, his alteration as an alteration. On this score Ritson condemned Warton, the editors

³⁸Malone assumed an attitude of nonchalance to Ritson, but he confessedly stood in awe of the critic's wrath, and he took special care to let it be known that he had collated diligently the 100,000 lines of Shakespeare's text. See the letter in the *Gentleman's Magazine* and the *Letter to Farmer* cited above.

of Shakespeare, and, most of all, Bishop Percy. Although his personal opinions colored his criticisms, yet he stood true to the proper function of an editor in textual matters. Here again he exerted a salutary influence upon his century and hastened the day of "modern" editing.

These were, in a measure, criticisms of Shakespeare's editors, but their accuracy reflects the solid basis of most of the notes on the poet, especially of those not inspired by purely personal motives. The great majority of the notes were acknowledged, however grudgingly, by late eighteenth century editors, but Ritson has been all but lost sight of by modern editors, and the credit for many of his notes has gone to others.³⁹ From the citations in the following pages can be gleaned a fairly comprehensive idea of the nature of Ritson's criticisms and of their intrinsic value.

The problem of filling out the metre of certain of Shakespeare's lines was a troublesome one and gave rise to various suggestions by the commentators. To the theory of Tyrwhitt and Steevens that Shakespeare arbitrarily lengthened a word in which *l* or *r* is subjoined to another consonant, and to that of Malone that any "short" line may be properly filled out by making a dissyllable of a convenient monosyllable, Ritson was equally opposed. He immediately diagnosed Malone's case as a "total want of ear", and unmercifully castigated him for tampering with metre. Tyrwhitt's theory he ridiculed as lacking foundation in grammar and orthography. For it he wished to substitute a pet orthographical system of his own—a system based on a study of sixteenth century grammars—which he fondly believed to be the only salvation for our present "thoroughly corrupted" system of spelling. "Every verb in the English language", he declared, "gains an additional syllable by its termination in *est*, *eth*, *ed*, *ing*, or (when formed into a substantive) in *er*." The fact that Shakespeare did not seem to have been guided by this rule was sufficient reason for its rejection by all save its author. Ritson himself made an accurate forecast of its reception as the mark of its author's eccentricity when he said:

"These ideas had they been more germane to the object of these sheets, or more likely to experience a favorable reception, might have been much expanded and further pursued; but, indeed, our orthographical system is so thoroughly corrupted, and the principles and formations of the language are, even by those who have professedly treated the subject, so little investigated or understood, that a writer, hardy enough to attempt a reform, will naturally expect to find many of his

³⁹Reed, 1785, included half the notes from *Remarks*; Malone, 1790, utilized Reed's selections as well as nearly all the new material in *Quip Modest*; Steevens, 1793, made use of practically everything in *Cursory Criticisms* in addition to the notes from the earlier volumes that had been accepted by his predecessors.

clearest axioms considered as the offspring of singularity, affectation and caprice."⁴⁰

The knowledge of medieval literature which stood him in such good stead in his work with the ballads and romances Ritson used to advantage in criticisms on Shakespeare. He printed for the first time a pageant of the Nine Worthies from MS. Tanner, 407, in illustration of *Love's Labor Lost*, V. ii. 486. His familiarity with folk-lore enabled him to correct current misconceptions about "other world" creatures. In an extended debate on the mortality of fairies (*Midsummer Night's Dream*, II. i. 101) Ritson had decidedly the better of his opponents. By a wealth of allusion to Shakespeare and his contemporaries he proved that fairies in general, and Shakespeare's fairies in particular, are immortal.⁴¹ He likewise corrected Johnson's misleading note on "changeling" (*Midsummer Night's Dream*, II. i. 23) by pointing out that since a fairy was speaking, "changeling" was properly used for the child taken in exchange.⁴²

Ritson was a close and accurate student of the early forms of language, and he gave correct glosses to many words that had been misunderstood by previous commentators. In the following examples, culled at random, his glosses are supported by the *New English Dictionary* but are not credited to him in the *New Variorum Shakespeare*.

L. L. L. I. i. 5. "imp" means graff, slip, scion; and, by metonymy, a boy or child.⁴³

Mac. IV. iii. 194. "latch"=catch, from A. S. *laeccan*.⁴⁴

Rich. III. II. iv. 35. "parlous", a corruption of perilous, dangerous.⁴⁵

Ant. and Cleo. III. vi. 95. "trull", a strumpet.⁴⁶

Cymb. V. ii. 4. "carl", A. S. *ceorl*, a churl or husbandman.⁴⁷

⁴⁰*Remarks*, pp. 6-8; *Quip Modest*, pp. 1-6. Ritson praised Shakespeare for the broad-mindedness and liberality which made him tolerant of all parties and all creeds and enabled him to transcend the petty strife and turmoil of his day—to be not for an age but for all time. But the critic was unable to emulate the poet. Not only did he ride an orthographical hobby, but he could not avoid expressing with vigor and sometimes with virulence his personal political and religious views. See *Remarks*, pp. 66, 84, 104, 114, 124, 137, 173, 188, and *Quip Modest* and *Cursory Criticisms*, passim.

⁴¹*Remarks*, p. 43; *Quip Modest*, pp. 11-14. With a characteristic display of revengeful abuse Ritson alluded to the discomfiture of his opponents in this controversy in the "Dissertation on Fairies" prefixed to *Fairy Tales*. See Chapter VI.

⁴²*Remarks*, p. 42.

⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p. 78.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, p. 133.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, p. 149.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, p. 167.

Ritson honored Dr. Johnson for the sturdy common sense which enabled him to brush away from simple passages the mass of difficult interpretations which more artificial thinkers had placed upon them.⁴⁸ And this saving quality was not wholly lacking in his own criticisms. The examples which follow have been credited, in the *New Variorum* to other writers from Ritson's day down to the latter half of the nineteenth century.

M. N. D. II. i. 51. "aunt, in this place at least, certainly means no other than an innocent old woman."⁴⁹

M. of V. III. iv. 72. *Por.* I could not do withal. "Could a lady of Portia's good sense, high station, and elegant manners, speak (or even think) so grossly? It is impossible. There is no hint of a bawdy or immoral meaning."⁵⁰

Lear IV. ii. 83. *Gon.* One way I like this well. "Goneril is glad to hear of Cornwall's death, because, by her sisters, now rendered less difficult to compass, she could possess the whole kingdom."⁵¹

R. and J. II. vi. 14. *Fri. L.* Too swift arrives as tardy as too slow. "Alluding to the vulgar proverb: The more haste the worse speed."⁵²

R. and J. III. ii. 113. That "banished", that one word "banished"
Hath slain ten thousand Tybalts.

"I am more affected by Romeo's banishment than I should be by the death of ten thousand such relations as Tybalt."⁵³

Ham. II. ii. 185. *Ham.* Conception is a blessing, but not as your daughter may conceive.

"Conception (understanding), says Hamlet, is a blessing, but the conception (pregnancy) of your daughter would not be one."⁵³

It must be recognized that Ritson's forte was in the minutiae of criticism. He had a knowledge of details and an acquaintance with the sources of Shakespeare material that would have done credit to any commentator. He was not, however, devoid of a sympathetic appreciation of Shakespeare's characters or of each play as a whole. His notes are

⁴⁸Although Boswell makes no mention of Ritson, there is more than a bare possibility that Johnson had met him personally. According to Nicolas (*Op. Cit.*, p. xxx) "a note exists from Davies, the bookseller [1782-1835], to Ritson, stating that Johnson would be glad to see him on the following day, or on the ensuing Friday; and that he, Davies, would be happy to wait on him if convenient, probably to introduce them." The note is not dated. Ritson's natural timidity would make it improbable that he sought the acquaintance of Johnson while he was preparing his first criticism on Shakespeare, and there is little reason to suppose that Johnson would have desired an acquaintance before the publication of *Remarks*.

⁴⁹*Remarks*, p. 42.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, p. 53.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, p. 171.

⁵²*Ibid.*, p. 181.

⁵³*Ibid.*, p. 197.

interspersed with happy bits of criticism which reveal a soul responsive to the appeal of poetry. Yet it was unfortunate that he seemed to require the stimulus of a judgment with which he did not agree in order to produce his own estimate. As a result, his remarks frequently took on the nature of rebuttal, and because of their controversial flavor their sincerity was often questioned. The one shining example of Ritson's ability in the larger sweep of interpretation is his review of *Hamlet* in answer to the irreverent and unappreciative construction given by Steevens.

Steevens, in analyzing *Hamlet*, advanced the theory that the play was a study in immoral conduct and its dire consequences in a weak character. He argued that Hamlet was a youth whose faculties had been impaired by the death of his father, the loss of an expected kingship, and the sense of shame resulting from the incestuous marriage of his mother. He made but one attempt to avenge his father,—when he mistook Polonius for the king. He deliberately procured the death of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. He was responsible for the distraction and death of Ophelia and outraged common decency by interrupting her funeral. And at last he killed the king to revenge himself and not his father. His own death the poet meant as a sacrifice for his immoral conduct. He is not deserving the pity of the reader or spectator because of the iniquitous means by which he finally accomplished his purpose.⁵⁴

Such an interpretation was, to a worshipper of Shakespeare, nothing less than sacrilege. Ritson decried the want of reverence which Steevens had manifested and in a long review of the play justified Hamlet's conduct and contended that the poet's aim was to excite sympathy for a noble character prevented by circumstances beyond his control from accomplishing his single and unrelinquished purpose; a character deserving the pity of the audience because of his virtue, his unparalleled misfortunes, and the final sacrifice of his own life to the deed he set out to perform. He writes, in part, as follows:

"Hamlet, the onely child of the late king, upon whose death he became lawfully intitled to the crown, had, it seems, ever since that event, been in a state of melancholy, owing to excessive grief for the suddenness with which it had taken place, and an indignant horror at his mothers speedy and incestuous marriage. The spirit of the king his father appears, and makes him acquainted with the circumstances of his untimely fate, which he excites him to *revenge*: this Hamlet engages to do: an engagement it does not appear he ever forgot. . . . To conceal, and, at a convenient time, to effect, his purpose, he counterfeits madness. . . . He soon after espies the usurper at prayers, but resolves, and with great justice

⁵⁴Johnson and Steevens, *Shakspeare*, 1778, Vol. X, p. 411 ff. See also Helene Richter, *Geschichte der Englischen Romantik*, Halle, 1911, Vol. I, p. 99.

resolves, not to kill him in the very moment when he might be making his peace with heaven, inasmuch as a death so timed would have been rather a happiness than a punishment, and, by no means, a proper revenge for his father's murder. . . . At the beginning of this conference [with his mother] he mistakes Polonius, who was *behind the arras*, and about to alarm the household, for the usurper, and, under that apprehension, stabs him. . . . He is, immediately, sent off to England: and, in his passage, discovers the treacherous and fatal purpose of the commission with which his companion and pretended friends were charged. These men, he knew, had eagerly solicited and even thrust themselves upon his employment; and he had, of course, sufficient reason to conclude that they were well acquainted with the nature and purport of their fatal packet. . . . His own safety depended on their removal; and, at such a time, and under such circumstances, he would have been fully justified in using any means to procure it. . . . Walking with his friend Horatio through a church yard, he enters into conversation with a grave-digger; but, presently, observing the approach of a funeral procession, he says to Horatio, to whom he was then speaking:

Soft, soft, aside. Here comes the King.
The queen, the courtiers; *Who is this they follow?*
And with such maimed rites? This doth betoken
The corse they follow, did with desperate hand
Foredo its own life. 'Twas of some estate.
Couch we a while, and mark.

. . . . Laertes asking *what ceremony else?* Hamlet observes to Horatio, *That is Laertes; a very noble youth*. Laertes concluding his expostulation about the further honors with the following beautiful lines:

—lay her i' the earth;
And from her fair and unpolluted flesh
May violets spring!—I tell thee, churlish priest,
A ministering angel shall *my sister* be,
When thou liest howling;

Hamlet exclaims; *What! the fair Ophelia?* Laertes bids

—Treble woe
Fall ten times treble on that cursed head,
Whose wicked deed thy most ingenious sense
Deprived thee of;

an execration Hamlet cannot but perceive to be pointed at himself. Having uttered this curse, Laertes, hastily, and in direct violation of all decorum, jumps into the grave, where he 'rants and mouths it' like a player. This outrageous proceeding seems to infect Hamlet; who, forgetting himself, as he afterward, with sorrow, owns to Horatio, and, by the 'bravery' of the others grief being worked up 'into a towering passion', leaps in after him. . . .

"The affection Hamlet now boasts for Ophelia was genuine and violent; we find him with the very same sentiments in the beginning of the play, and he has never once disowned it, except on a single occasion, when the sacrifice was required by his assumed character; a circumstance which cannot, at least ought not to, be imputed to him as a crime.

" . . . Hamlet, in a trial of skill with Laertes, receives an unexpected, a treacherous, and mortal wound. Immediately before the company enter, he appears to be much troubled in mind; his spirits foreboding what was to happen: 'If it be now', says he, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come; the readiness is all.' . . . Being thus wounded, and on the threshold of futurity, if he had not killed the usurper immediately, the villain would have escaped unpunished. But he does not stab him for his treachery toward himself,—he upbraids him with his crimes of incest and murder,—and consigns him to the infernal regions,

With all his 'rank offences' thick upon him.

So that he sufficiently revenges his father, his mother (who, by the way, dyes, if not deservedly, at least unpityed), and himself. As to his own fall, every reader or spectator must sympathise with Horatio, for the untimely loss of a youthful prince possessed of such great and amiable qualities, rendered miserable by such unparalleled misfortunes;

—For he was likely, had he been put on,
To have prov'd most royally;

and who falls a sacrifice to the most base and infernal machinations. His death, however, is not to be looked upon as a punishment; the most innocent, as Shakespeare well knew, are frequently confounded with the most guilty; and the virtues of Hamlet were to be rewarded among those angels which his friend Horatio invokes to escort him to everlasting rest."⁵⁵

This quotation is given because it reveals a phase of Ritson's character all too seldom discovered and shows the eloquence he could attain to under proper stimulus. With more writing of this kind to his credit it would be unjust to say he was a man "who lived on syllables" and who was devoid of the finer sensibilities of character.

Although Ritson's published volumes place him among Gray, Collins, Farmer, Tyrwhitt, and the other authors of detached pieces of criticism, yet he hoped to be ranked with Theobald, Johnson, Steevens, Reed, and Malone as an editor of Shakespeare. He long cherished the ambition to leave as a symbol of devotion a complete edition of "the god of his idolatry." At least as early as 1782 he had formed the design,⁵⁶ but it was not announced to the public until April 18, 1783. At that time there appeared on the last page of the *Remarks* a prospectus for "An edition of the plays of William Shakspeare, with notes, *preparing for the press.*" The edition was to comprise eight duodecimo volumes; the text was to be "carefully and accurately printed from

⁵⁵*Remarks*, pp. 217-224.

⁵⁶When in November, 1782, Rowntree asked to borrow a *Shakespeare*, Ritson replied that his only edition was not fit to leave the chambers, but added, alluding no doubt to his own contemplated work: "twenty years hence I shall probably have it in my power to give you an edition of the immortal bard." *Letters*, I, p. 63.

the only copies of real authority, the two first folios," with painstaking collation of the old quartos and an accurate statement of all variations adopted; doubtful readings were to be settled "from an attentive examination of the sentiments of every commentator"; notes were to be introduced only where they seemed absolutely necessary; the author's life and the prefaces of his various editors were to be prefixed and an accurate glossary added; and an extra volume was to contain "a complete verbal index". This edition was to be, with regard to the correctness of the text, "infinitely superior to any that has yet appeared"; it was to possess all "the advantages of every former edition, and be as little liable as possible to the defects of any".

Coming as it did upon the heels of his captious attack upon Johnson and Steevens, this announcement appeared as a challenge to Shakespeare editors. But had Ritson had the hardihood to publish at this time, he could not have met with success. When such a brilliant galaxy of commentators and editors as Johnson, Steevens, Tyrwhitt, Farmer, Reed, and Malone possessed the ear of the booksellers and the confidence of the public, an edition of Shakespeare by an antiquary who was minutely accurate in details, who held advanced notions of the functions of an editor and critic, who was uncompromising in praise and blame alike, who was, above all, pugnacious and controversial—an edition by such an one would have met with scant approval in most quarters and with open rejection in many. Ritson sensed the situation accurately. On February 1, 1788, in the preface to *Quip Modest*, he replied thus to the enquiries that had been made concerning his edition:

"In truth, the attention requisite to the publication of so voluminous a work, and the little likelihood there is of its being productive to the undertaker of anything but trouble and expense, together with other causes of less consequence, have hitherto deterred me from putting it to press. But I have neither laid aside all thoughts of bringing it forward, nor can I pledge myself to produce it in any given time. I have little reason to suppose that the Public interests itself at all in the matter, and therefore think myself at full liberty to suit my own inclination and convenience."

Following this pronunciamento he made enough effort to put two sheets of *Comedy of Errors* to the press. Here the matter rested, although it is certain that he did not for some years give up his notion of eventually perfecting his edition and perhaps never entirely relinquished it. To the indifference of the public, which he felt keenly, was soon added physical illness which materially lessened the amount of his literary labor. In the middle of 1790 he wrote to Joseph Cooper Walker, the antiquary:

"I know not whether I shall ever have resolution enough to put an edition

of this favorite author into the press, as the public will for some time be completely glutted with editions of one kind or another."⁵⁷

Two years later he was still gathering material and declared that he had yet "some intention of printing an edition of Shakspeare."⁵⁸

Indeed he was, throughout life, making notes, exchanging suggestions with friends, and amassing material for an edition of the dramatist. Although only the three pamphlets already reviewed were published, yet much more was prepared. The catalogue of the sale of Ritson's library records the ten volumes of the Johnson and Steevens *Shakspeare* and the four volumes of *Shakspeare's Twenty Plays*, by Steevens, as "filled with MS. notes and comments by Mr. Ritson." In addition, there were three volumes of manuscript material "prepared by Mr. Ritson for the press, intending to publish it."⁵⁹

With the exception of twenty-three pages of variant readings,⁶⁰ all this material—the painstaking accumulation of a lifetime—has disappeared from view. Had he published his material in final form, Ritson's edition of Shakespeare would undoubtedly have compared favorably with any of his century. He had a knowledge of the quartos and folios not surpassed by any of his contemporaries and a capacity for taking pains not equalled by any. He had a better ear than Malone, more reverence for his author than Steevens, and a finer critical insight than Reed. He would have laid under tribute a vast knowledge of medieval literature and a wide acquaintance with the English language in its early forms. His glossary and verbal index would probably have been the most valuable parts of his edition, for he long complained of Ayscough's *Index*, and he had consistently corrected the glosses of previous editions. The most likely fault of his work would have been the outcropping of the acidity of his nature in personal abuse of fellow editors.—But this is speculation. Unless the lost manuscripts are by

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, I, p. 168.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, I, p. 215.

⁵⁹At the Ritson sale Longman purchased "for the trade" the annotated Johnson and Steevens *Shakspeare* and the three volume manuscript of Ritson's notes. It is not known why he did not publish the material. In 1824 Haslewood waxed indignant at what he called the "singular apathy or inconsistency of the bibliopolistical monopolizers" and professed to believe that a conspiracy to defame Ritson existed even after his death. (*Op. Cit.*, p. 44.) But the publishers probably acted on purely commercial considerations. This material was disposed of at Longman's sale in 1842 and has not been located since.

⁶⁰These pages, now in the library of Mr. Perry, contain 159 parallel passages from the two first folios compiled in the endeavor to convict Malone of adopting all the "gross and palpable errors of the first folio". Seventeen of them were printed in the Introduction to *Cursory Criticisms*.

good fortune discovered, Ritson's fame as a Shakespeare commentator must rest upon the *Remarks, Quip Modest, and Cursory Criticisms*. Making due allowance for an unhappy manner, this reputation is by no means the least of the eighteenth century.

CHAPTER V.

EDITORIAL LABORS, 1783-1795

First period as an editor and collector—*English Songs*—Makes strong appeal for popular favor—Emphasizes editorial accuracy—Manifests interest in literary antiquities of Stockton by publishing *Bishoprick Garland* and *Gammer Gurton's Garland*—Publishes *Spartan Manual* for nephew—*Yorkshire Garland*—Correspondence with Walker—Illness—*Ancient Songs*—Its general character—Appeal to critical student—Glossary—*Ancient Popular Poetry*—Contents—Preface—Revises Reed's *Dido*—*North-Country Chorister*—*Northumberland Garland*—*English Anthology*—Plan—Appeal for public favor—Abuse of reviewers—Transcribes Hodgson's *Memoirs*—*Scotish Songs*—Labor in compiling—Contents—Critical reception—*Minot's Poems*—First critical edition—Date of MS.—Minot's personality and literary rank—*Robin Hood*—The Life—The Poems—Critical estimate.

With the publication of the *Observations*, in 1782, Ritson's literary career may be said to have begun. From that time on to the close of his life he was known to his contemporaries as an editor and a critic rather than as a conveyancer. As has already been indicated, he continued in his profession and devoted enough attention to it not only to gain a livelihood but also to publish some valuable professional books of an antiquarian nature, but his serious concern with the law decreased in proportion as his purely literary interests increased. In literature his work is primarily that of an editor, secondarily that of a critic. His editorial labors fall naturally into two periods determined by the insecure state of his health. The first extends to 1795 when a nervous ailment became so severe as to put a temporary stop to his work. During the years 1785 to 1795 he saw through the press twenty publications totalling twenty-six volumes. Of these, six titles have already been considered. The others remain for treatment in the present chapter. With three exceptions these volumes consist of collections of poems, ballads, and songs of a somewhat popular type. Several of them contain introductory essays of an historical and critical nature. For the most part this material will be reserved for discussion in the next chapter but one. We are here concerned with the edited matter only.

Besides his first Shakespeare pamphlet, Ritson published in 1783¹ *A Select Collection of English Songs, with their Original Airs*, in three

¹Allibone, Op. Cit., credits Ritson with the continuation of Ben Jonson's *Sad Shepherd, or a Tale of Robin Hood*, published anonymously in 1783 under the title, *An attempt to continue and complete the justly admired Pastoral of the Sad*

volumes.² One is immediately struck with the typographical elegance of this collection. It is delightfully printed. There is an excellent frontispiece by the Swiss artist Fuseli,³ and scattered throughout the volumes are several pleasing vignettes by Stothard.⁴ Ritson was exceedingly vain of the mechanical appearance of his publications and prided himself on their typographical finish almost as much as on their critical accuracy. He wrote to a friend that his books were "not without some merit as an example of the printer's art", and he was always pleased when the format of his work was praised. The fact that he went to great expense in illustrating his publications and in printing them in superior style (a part of several editions was printed "on fine paper") made it impossible for him to realize anything from their sale. He frequently complained that all his publications except the little *Garlands* were a drain on his purse, but it seems never to have occurred to him that he might have lost less money on his publications if he had allowed the printer to bring them forth in an equally substantial but less elegant dress. In fact, this very insistence upon superior typography, coupled with his haphazard business methods, led frequently through misunderstandings to disrupted friendships.⁵ In *English Songs* the use of musical type added to the difficulties of publication. Musical printing did not develop as rapidly in England as on the continent,⁶ and at that time there was but one printer in the kingdom who possessed a sufficient quantity of musical type for this work and those were all of equal size and character.⁷

Shepherd. This is the work of Francis G. Waldron (1744-1818). See *Ben Jonson's Sad Shepherd with Waldron's Continuation*, edited by W. W. Greg as vol. xi. of *Materialism zur Kunde des alteren Englischen Dramas*, Louvain, 1905.

²References are to the second edition "with additional songs and occasional notes" by Thomas Park, 3 vols., London, 1813.

³Henry Fuseli (1741-1825), Swiss painter, spent practically the whole of his life in England. As an artist he had many things in common with Reynolds and Blake. His most noteworthy paintings are perhaps his Shakespeare and Milton productions. It was through his intimacy with Joseph Johnson, bookseller of St. Paul's Churchyard, that he designed the frontispiece for Ritson's *English Songs*.

⁴Thomas Stothard (1755-1834) is famous chiefly as a book-illustrator. His long friendship with Blake was terminated as a result of Cromek's clandestine dealings concerning the painting of the "Canterbury Pilgrims."

⁵In this regard *English Songs* took its toll in the friendship of Christopher, Ritson's Stockton bookseller. See *Letters*, I, pp. 111-113.

⁶Cf. Robert Steele, *The Earliest English Music Printing*, London, 1903; *Encyc. Brit.*, art. "Typography".

⁷As late as 1813, Park says it was necessary to cast the type twice for musical notes, and even then the second font was quite defective in blending the ligatures of the notes. *English Songs*, I, p. xvii, note.

The excellence of the printer's workmanship is, however, quite in keeping with the editor's ideals in forming the collection of *English Songs*. In the Preface Ritson justifies his work on high moral grounds. Previous song collections in the eighteenth century were filled with coarse and immoral material. D'Urfey's famous and popular six volume "singing book"⁸ was notoriously vulgar and immodest, and although D'Urfey intended the songs to be sung by the youth of both sexes he saw no necessity for apologizing for the impudicity of the pieces. Collectors after him, from Ramsay to Aikin,⁹ called attention to the chastity of their volumes, and while the collections are far from pure when judged by present day standards, the men were justified in congratulating themselves on their service to morality when they remembered that the public had once been delighted with the obscenity which D'Urfey had foisted upon them. But of all these men Aikin was the only one who approached with any degree of proximity the ideal which they exalted in their prefaces. Ritson was outspoken in his disapproval on moral grounds of previous song collections, and he aimed rigidly to correct their faults on this score by excluding from his own collection "every composition, however celebrated, or however excellent, of which the slightest expression, or the most distant allusion could have tinged the cheek of delicacy, or offended the purity of the chastest ear".¹⁰ In this endeavor Ritson succeeded better than any of his predecessors and for his achievement received the unalloyed praise of his contemporaries. In some other exclusions he was not so fortunate. These strictures were in some cases the result of purely personal dislikes. Such is the exclusion of songs on Freemasonry, those "absurd, conceited, enigmatic, and unintelligible" compositions which "seemed calculated rather to disgrace than to embellish the collection." Others are the result of sweeping and rather hasty generalizations; as when he says that the insertion of songs on political topics has been studiously avoided because "the best of these pieces are not only too temporary, but too partial to gain applause when their subjects are forgotten, and their satire has lost its force."¹¹ This criticism would apply to most but by no means all political songs.

Quite different from the point of view in his earlier publications, which were aimed primarily for the student and antiquary, is that taken

⁸Thomas D'Urfey, *Wit and Mirth; or Pills to Purge Melancholy*, London, 1719-20.

⁹Cf. Allan Ramsay, *Tea-table Miscellany* and *The Evergreen*, London, 1724; William Thomson, *Orpheus Caledonius*, 1725; Benjamin Wakefield, *Warbling Muses*, 1749; Edward Capell, *Prolusions*, 1760; John Aikin, *Essays on Song Writing*, 1772 and 1774.

¹⁰*English Songs*, Preface, p. vii.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. x.

in the Preface to *English Songs*. There he makes a strong bid for popular favor. Like all preceding collectors he apologizes for the old popular songs which he feels obliged to include, and flatters the refined taste of his polished age. He deferentially explains that the old ballads which form the last section of his collection "would by no means assimilate or mix with the more polished contents of the preceding divisions" and tells the reader that "he must be content to take them, as they were probably written,—at least, as they have come down to us,—'with all their imperfections on their heads'."¹²

The omissions already noted were a part of his appeal for public approval. There were others. Those who look in this collection for extracts from the vast manuscript stores with which Ritson was familiar will be disappointed. While he professed acquaintance with a "prodigious quantity" of unpublished lyric poetry, he confidently assured his readers that every piece before them had already appeared in print. "The editor", he writes, "could not, consistently with his respect for the public, obtrude upon them a single line, which had not been already stamped with their approbation, or on the merits of which they had not had an opportunity to decide."¹³

A still further plea for general approbation was made by playing upon the chord of patriotism, by appealing to the national spirit. Ritson deprecated the "fashionable rage for music" which caused the people of his day to forsake the old songs and ancient ballads and turn to the ephemeral tunes of the second-rate play houses. In this he was seconding an earlier opinion of Dr. Aikin, who characterized the tendency of the times in this wise: "the most enchanting tunes are suited with the most flat and wretched combinations of words that ever disgraced the genius of a nation; and the miserable versifier only appears as the hired underling of a musical composer."¹⁴ As an antidote to this "popular" music Ritson advocated a return to the old songs whose simple melodies served only to enhance the sentiment of the words.¹⁵ This was his chief

¹²*Ibid.*, p. xiii.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. xi.

¹⁴John Aikin, *Op. Cit.*, 2nd edition, Preface, p. vi.

¹⁵More than a decade earlier (1769) Benjamin Franklin, then in London, had expressed the same idea in a letter to Peter Franklin, who had sent him a song to be set to music by one of the London composers. After expressing the opinion that some Massachusetts country girl who had heard nothing but "Chevy Chase" and "The Children in the Woods" and had naturally a good ear "might more probably have made a pleasing popular tune than any of our masters here. [London]", he adds of the modern composers: "they are admirable at pleasing practised ears, and know how to delight one another; but, in composing for songs, the reigning taste seems to be quite out of nature, or rather the reverse of nature,

reason for adding in the last part of his collection the old ballads which he called the "genuine effusions of the English muse, unadulterated with the sentimental refinements of Italy or France." He professed to be rendering a distinctly national service by including in his collection the genuine ancient songs of the English, while he ignored the "mushroom growth of comic operas" which the recent "fashionable rage" for French and Italian music had caused to spring up in England.¹⁶

Ritson sought further to curry popular favor by the simplicity and naturalness of the arrangement of the songs. One of his chief reasons for venturing to add another to the already numerous collections of somewhat similar nature was that he would present on an improved plan and within brief compass the best lyrics in the English language, which otherwise had to be sought through a large number of volumes and mixed with a mass of other material. He expressed the idea in characteristically trenchant language thus:

"For who, let his desires and his convenience be what they may, will think it worth his while to peruse, much less to purchase, two or three hundred volumes, merely because each of them may happen to contain a couple of excellent songs? Everyone who wishes to possess a pearl, is not content to seek it in an ocean of mud".¹⁷

The pearls being now brought together, the question was to arrange them for the most effective display. This Ritson considered to be the most natural and simple from the reader's point of view, and he disclaimed any desire for personal commendation for an "ingenious" arrangement.

As classification presupposes definition, Ritson's first task was to define song and distinguish song from ballad.

"Song, in its most general acceptance, is defined to be the expression of a sentiment, sensation or image, the description of an action, or the narrative of an event, by words differently measured, and attached to certain sounds, which we call melody or tune."¹⁸

On the basis of this general definition Ritson made a division into "songs strictly and properly so called" and "ballads or mere narrative compo-

and yet like a torrent, hurries them all away with it; one or two perhaps only excepted." *The Writings of Benjamin Franklin*, ed. A. H. Smyth, New York and London, 1906. Vol. V, p. 529.

¹⁶The purely English character of the collection is further enhanced by rejecting almost all Irish songs and by rigidly excluding Scottish productions. A further reason for the last omission is to be found in the fact that Ritson was planning a separate collection of "songs entirely Scottish."

¹⁷*Eng. Songs*, Pref., p. ii. Aikin considered the business of classifying a disagreeable task, but Ritson professes to take pleasure in it.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, Historical Essay, p. i.

sitions." This distinction was here for the first time clearly made, and it had a wholesome effect in clarifying later discussions on the whole ballad and song question. The songs in the confined sense form the first three divisions of *English Songs*, ballads the fourth.

The first and principal division, "Love Songs", is subdivided into five classes, each with its characteristic theme. This part of the work is a veritable store-house of song. It comprises pieces from authors ranging in time from Marlowe and Raleigh to Dr. Johnson, and in poetic merit running the gamut from Barton Booth and Sir William Yonge to Shakespeare. The second division consists of half a hundred pieces unfortunately designated "Drinking Songs". It was the excess of Bacchanalian verses, with their attendant licentiousness, freedom, and immorality, that had disgraced previous song collections in Ritson's eyes. In making his own selection he considered that he had performed a commendable service for his generation, for he had carefully excluded every piece that might give offense to the most refined. If Ritson erred here, it was in that his enthusiasm for morality led him to excessive strictures. Into a third division, "Miscellaneous Songs", are thrown all those pieces of poetic merit which a strict observance of his classification had excluded from the foregoing sections. It includes some of the most delightful songs in the whole collection. After these three groups of songs follows a comparatively small number of old popular ballads. The third volume of the collection is devoted to the musical notation of the songs contained in the other two volumes. In this part of the work Ritson experienced peculiar difficulty, for, by his own confession, his knowledge of music was quite limited. This handicap was, however, largely overcome through the generous assistance of his old Stockton friend, William Shield.¹⁹

In the preface to *English Songs* there is a curious mingling of two ideals which in the eighteenth century had seemed incompatible. Not only does Ritson make a strong plea for the favor of the popular reader, the person who wishes to receive a little instruction and more amusement, the "man of taste", but he places much emphasis on fidelity to sources and accuracy in editing. The songs are all published from the best edition of the author's works or from some other reliable source

¹⁹Ritson made no attempt to give any music further than a simple treble. He apologizes to "such fair readers as may complain of the want of a bass part for their harpsichords" by saying that it was impracticable to complicate the musical notation to such a degree. An amusing side-light on this explanation is afforded by Park's statement that he once heard "a lady of high musical repute inquire whether a *bass* had been printed with the airs of his *English Songs*, to which the editor replied, "A *bass*! what would you have a *bass* for?—to spoil the treble?" *English Songs*, Pref., p. xv, and note.

and corrected by a careful collation of all available authentic copies. He is careful to point out that all variations adopted are indicated in the notes. It is in the last section of the work, however, that Ritson has most to say about this point, and here began a quarrel with Percy's editorial methods which he carried on with increasing vigor for the remainder of his life. In this part of the preface he seems to have forgotten the man of taste, for the moment at least, and to have in mind only the critical student and the antiquarian.

Each of the ballads included in this work Ritson says "has been transcribed from some old copy, generally in black letter; and has, in most cases, been collated with various others." He has kept closely to his originals, varying the text only so far as to modernize the spelling—a slight concession to the man of taste—and to correct obvious typographical errors. Half of the twenty-eight ballads included had been previously printed by Percy in the *Reliques*, a work which Ritson commended as "beautiful, elegant, and ingenious". But the elegance of the publication did not blind him to Percy's editorial laxness, nor was it sufficient to stop up the vials of his wrath, which had not been emptied on Warton, Steevens, et al. In preparing his own collection Ritson had had frequent recourse to the originals from which Percy had professedly printed the ballads, "but not one", he says, "has upon examination, been found to be followed with either fidelity or correctness," and they who look into the *Reliques* "to be acquainted with the state of ancient poetry, will be miserably disappointed or fatally misled." And then, led on by his animosity to editorial carelessness he indulges in a bitter personal thrust at Percy.

"Forgery and imposition of every kind, ought to be universally execrated, and never more than when employed by persons high in rank or character, and those very circumstances are made use of to sanctify the deceit."²⁰

A comparison of the texts printed by Percy and Ritson with those given in Child's monumental collection²¹ proves Ritson to be far superior to his celebrated contemporary in accuracy and fidelity to originals. Allowing, then, for a warmth of expression which was perfectly natural to Ritson, his judgment that "the inaccurate and sophisticated manner in which every thing that had real pretensions to antiquity, has been printed" by Percy "would be a sufficient apology for any one who might undertake to publish, more faithful, though, haply, less elegant copies",

²⁰*Ibid.*, p. xii, note.

²¹F. J. Child, *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, Boston, 1882. Of the fourteen ballads given in common by Percy and Ritson ten are printed by Child.

is not much afield so far as the strict requirements of editorial accuracy go.

These same rigid canons of editorship Ritson carried into his work with the music of the songs. He insisted, first of all, upon the original air for each song. A large number of the old airs had, of course, been forgotten and were irrevocably lost. Of those that were known, many were faulty and had to be rearranged. In all cases there was the problem of harmonizing the words and music. Here it was Ritson's somewhat revolutionary demand that the music should be made to fit the words of the song, not vice versa. Two composers who incurred his condemnation for the opposite practice were Dr. Arne,²² "whose own professional excellence might have taught him the respect due that of another", and William Jackson of Exeter,²³ "who has gone so far as to prefix to one of his publications a formal defense of the freedom he had exercised upon the unfortunate bards who have fallen into his clutches." In his aversion to altering the original tunes Ritson was fortunately supported by Shield, who wrote to him:

"I feel very differently from many of my brother professors, for although practise must improve my harmonical knowledge, it does not lessen the value of a simple national melody, which I hope will ever be admired by every sensible mind."²⁴

Ritson's diverse aims in collecting and publishing *English Songs* are well summarized in a sentence in the Preface:

"Entirely to remove every objection to which the subject is, at present, open; to exhibit all the most admired, and intrinsically excellent specimens of lyric poetry in the English language at one view; to promote real instructive entertainment; to satisfy the critical taste of the judicious; to indulge the nobler feelings of the pensive; and to afford innocent mirth to the gay; has been the complex object of the present publication."²⁵

How well he succeeded in the accomplishment of this manifold object is attested by the almost universal commendation with which the collection was received. Even his quondam enemies, the reviewers, took but passing notice of the harsh treatment of Percy and gave unstinted praise to the work as a whole.²⁶ He seems to have succeeded remarkably well in

²²Thomas Augustine Arne (1710-1778), musical composer and teacher, supplied the music for Covent Garden and Drury Lane for many years. His two most notable triumphs are "Rule Britannia", and "Where the Bee Sucks."

²³William Jackson, of Exeter, (1730-1803) was a musical composer, and author of numerous volumes of songs and many musical text books.

²⁴Quoted by Nicolas, *Op. Cit.*, p. xxxiv.

²⁵*English Songs*, Pref., p. ii.

²⁶See *Critical Review*, Vol. LVIII, pp. 300-4; *Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. LIV, pp. 817-18; *Monthly Review*, Vol. LXXIII, p. 234; and for the second edition,

pleasing both the student and the general reader; and he was fortunate in striking a period when the public was much interested in collections of songs, ballads, poems, and romances. This interest joined with Ritson's absorption in poetic antiquities to keep him working and publishing in this field. He seldom gave up working on a book when it had been issued from the press. Instead he immediately set about correcting and altering with an eye to a new edition. The suggestions of friends were always gratefully received, and he undoubtedly profited by hostile criticism although he made anything but grateful acknowledgment of it. A new edition of *English Songs* was contemplated and some progress made in its execution,²⁷ but the press of other work caused him to defer its publication until too late.

Ritson's immediate interest at this time centered for the moment in the literary antiquities of Stockton and its vicinity. The attention which he had earlier paid to the topographical antiquities of the north was diverted, with the general directing of his aims to literature, to its poetical remains. It may be merely a coincidence, but at this time and at each future period when he published poems of the north his attention was directed there by some special development in his non-literary interests. Just now his sister was in the illness which he mistakenly judged to be her last, and he was especially concerned for the future of her son, Joseph Frank. It may be that visits to Stockton because of family matters incited him to publish the material which he had been for some time collecting. In 1784 he published at Stockton, *The Bishoprick Garland; or Durham Minstrel: a Choice Collection of Excellent Songs*. This is a collection of sixteen northern provincial ballads²⁸ of interest mainly to residents of Durham county and to antiquaries. About this same period was issued at Stockton an anthology of nursery rhymes with the title, *Gammer Gurton's Garland, or The Nursery Parnassus*. Further collections of similar nature appeared at infrequent intervals.

It is highly probable that the special concern which Ritson felt for the proper guidance of his youthful nephew led him to publish, in 1785,²⁹ *The Spartan Manual, or Tablet of Morality: being a genuine Collection of*

Gentleman's Magazine, Vol. LXXXIII, p. 223; and *British Critic*, Vol. CLIII, pp. 153-9.

²⁷*Letters*, II, p. 109.

²⁸Ritson asked Harrison to suggest "alterations or remarks for the improvement of a second edition" (*Letters*, I, p. 110) which appeared in 1792 with six songs omitted. Two new ones were later added, and all eighteen were printed in the next edition.

²⁹In 1785 was printed *The Caledonian Muse*, a collection of Scottish poetry, but it was not published until many years later. It will be considered in the next chapter.

the Apophthegms, Maxims, and Precepts of the Philosophers, Heroes, and other great and celebrated Characters of Antiquity: under proper heads. For the improvement of Youth, and the promotion of Wisdom and Virtue. The expression in the title, "for the improvement of youth", his anxiety to supply Frank with a copy,³⁰ and certain comments in the Preface³¹ seem to indicate that the collection was prepared especially for his nephew. But if this is true, it did not prevent him from performing his task scientifically. He furnished an alphabetical table of the names, nationalities, and dates of the men whose words were quoted and supplied each quotation with the name of the author. The compilation is obviously designed for the desultory reader, and although it is a credit to the extent and care of the editor's reading among the ancient classics, it could not be expected to attract wide attention.³² The most interesting thing about it is the light it throws on Ritson's commendable desire to inoculate sound morality in the hearts of youth.

Since 1784 Ritson had been continuing his work on the Garlands. During this period nearly all of his summer vacations were spent in the north and much of his time while there was devoted to collecting songs from oral tradition and from literary friends interested in their preservation.³³ His third collection, *The Yorkshire Garland; being a curious collection of old and new songs concerning that famous county*, appeared in 1788.³⁴ This is a small pamphlet containing half a dozen local songs.

³⁰*Letters*, I, p. 101.

³¹*Spartan Manual*, Pref., pp. viii-ix.

³²The reviews were brief but commendatory. See *Monthly Review*, Vol. LXXII, p. 235; *Critical Review*, Vol. LIX, p. 398.

³³*Letters*, I, pp. 73-138, *passim*.

³⁴In 1788 also appeared *Homer's Hymn to Venus, translated from the Greek, with notes by I. Ritson*. The *Gentleman's Magazine* attributed this work to Joseph Ritson (Vol. LIX, p. 539) and included it in the list of his publications appended to the obituary notice (Vol. LXXIII, p. 987). This same mistake was made by Nichols and later corrected (*Lit. Anec.* VIII, pp. xii, 135, note.) The real translator was Isaac Ritson (1761-1789), a native of Scotland who supported himself in London by writing medical articles for the *Monthly Review*. Joseph Ritson left the following note in his copy of the *Hymn*: "This Isaac Ritson, a lame man, who walked with a crutch, was, for sometime schoolmaster at Penrith; but ambition having induce'd him to study physick, and adopting the principles and practise of Doctor Thomas Brown, he addicted hisself so much to that worthy physician's universal specifick—a glass of brandy, that he fel sick, went mad, and dye'd in the neighbourhood of London. Poor Isaac! thou should'st have remember'd the fate of Old Cole's dog, which was determine'd to take the wall of a wagon, and was crushed to death for his presumption. J. R." Quoted by Haslewood, *Op. Cit.*, p. 14, note.

Ritson's publications of songs and ballads, and especially the *Garlands*, served to attract the favorable notice of the Irish antiquary, Joseph Cooper Walker, who made commendatory mention of his work in the *Memoirs of the Irish Bards*. Ritson made a brief stop at Dublin on his way to the north during his vacation in 1789 for the purpose of picking up native songs but says that he "met with little or nothing except disappointment."³⁵ Shortly after this began a correspondence with Walker which was continued to the end of his life. Despite Ritson's disparaging note on the Irish in *English Songs*³⁶ and his unabating scorn of the natives of the island, he and Walker continued in a friendly way to exchange ideas on all manner of antiquarian topics. Their early interest was in Irish songs. Walker seemed a little jealous of Ritson's activity in collecting the songs but was appeased when informed by Ritson that he would never attempt to publish them, as "it would be the extreme of arrogance in me to attempt a work for which no one can be less qualified."

Collecting Irish songs which he did not intend to publish was hardly more than a diversion, however. Ritson had more serious projects in hand, and they soon began to materialize in printed form. A nervous illness which he says must have been stealing on him for years now became so distressing as to hinder his work and to find a place in most of his letters. The first mention of it occurs in a letter to Harrison in 1790 when he says:

"I am become so nervous, as they call it, that I have very seldom either resolution or capacity to write the shortest note on the most trivial occasion. Anything beyond a mere letter of business is attended with so much trouble and difficulty as to make me eagerly lay hold of any trifling pretext to put it off *till the next day*."³⁷

But although this illness constantly increased in severity, it did not effectively cut off his active work of publication for half a decade, and during this period he seemed to be spurred to increased efforts by the realization that his work would soon be stopped.

In 1787 he had completed and printed a collection of early songs under the title, *Ancient Songs, from the time of King Henry III to the Revolution*. For some unaccountable reason the publication of this volume was delayed until 1792 when it appeared bearing on the title page the date 1790, the year in which it must have been originally intended to be published. This was Ritson's second important contri-

³⁵*Letters*, I, p. 151.

³⁶*English Songs*, Pref., p. ix, note.

³⁷*Letters*, I, p. 162.

bution to the awakening interest in early and modern poetry which had received its signal impetus from the publication of Percy's *Reliques* and which was constantly fed by collections of songs and ballads, editions of the poets both separate and collected, and researches into the ancient literature of the English and neighboring peoples, from the *Ancient and Modern Songs* of Herd to Ellis's *Specimens of the Early English Poets*.

As the title of this collection indicates, *Ancient Songs* covers the period from the reign of Henry III to the Revolution. By bringing together the best songs and lyric productions of this period Ritson hoped to illustrate national history and to exhibit to his own generation the idealized manners and splendid traditions of a virile though perhaps a crude past.³⁸ In order the better to accomplish his end he arranged the songs in five classes on chronological considerations, a plan previously approximated in the *Reliques* and later adopted by Ellis and Southey in their *Specimens*.³⁹ The songs consist of old English lyric fragments like "The Cuckoo Song", stirring battle songs like "Flodden Field", delightful old carols, and love songs from the recognized poets of the later periods. It was not until the second edition, 1829, that the collection became rich in genuine ballads; at that time a number of pieces were added to Class four and the material was enlarged to two volumes.

Ritson's object in compiling *Ancient Songs* was somewhat different from that in *English Songs*. Although here he placed more emphasis on the appeal to the critical student, yet he made conscious effort to attract the general reader. This is seen in the typographical elegance of the work—scarcely less noticeable than in *English Songs*—and in the excellent vignettes by Stothard which stand at the beginning and end of each class. To offset these advantageous qualities, however, was an unfortunate error of judgment on the editor's part which militated against the popularity of his work. Ritson's veneration for the relics of antiquity and his desire to transmit the songs exactly as he found them induced him to print the earliest pieces with Anglo-Saxon characters and even the later ones with obsolete spelling. He soon came to feel that such scrupulous fidelity to the mechanical form of his originals was not de-

³⁸Ritson was always interested in reconstructing the private as well as the national life of the past. See his commendation of LeGrand's *Vie privée des Français*, and his suggestion for a similar treatment of the ancient Irish. *Letters*, I, p. 143.

³⁹When Park states that Ritson meant to conform his *Ancient Songs* to the *Specimens* of Ellis, "in the hope of obtaining for it poetic popularity", he overlooks the fact that Ritson's work was printed three years before that of Ellis appeared. See *English Songs*, I, p. xcv.

manded by even the most rigid canons of editorship, and he saw immediately that the sale of his work was impeded by the antique air which these innovations gave to it. In preparing the manuscript for a new edition he discarded both these disguises, and with it his work lost much of its forbidding aspect.⁴⁰

That Ritson was more deeply concerned with satisfying the critical reader than the man of taste is evident from a number of considerations. Here as everywhere else he was scrupulously careful in textual matters. Of the eighty-eight pieces in the first edition, fifty-four had previously appeared in print—some of them in black letter and some in book form. The remaining thirty-four are printed for the first time and are here rescued from the oblivion of manuscripts in various public libraries and in his own private collection. In some instances Ritson was able to correct the errors of former editors and historians⁴¹ and in others to afford more exact copies than had previously been available.⁴² He did most of the transcribing himself and so avoided the errors which nearly always result from having material of this sort pass through a third hand. His only deviation from this rule was in the case of songs in foreign tongues. In transcribing for the second edition the Latin "Drinking Ode" of Walter Mapes, and the French ballads "On King Richard I", "On the death of Simon de Montfort", and "The Recollections of Châtelain", he had the assistance of such friends as Ellis and Scott.⁴³

Prefixed to the songs are two critical dissertations which are a further concession to the antiquarian reader. Ritson was most at home in the Middle Ages, and in these dissertations "On the Ancient English Minstrels" and "On the Songs, Music, and Vocal and Instrumental Performance of the Ancient English" his critical faculties are shown to highest advantage; antiquarian erudition, elaborate research, and indefatigable care appear on every hand. Ritson was more voracious than Percy and more industrious than Warton, and he only fell short of the

⁴⁰Park says that the manuscript for a second edition of *Ancient Songs* was "totally destroyed at the morbid close of Ritson's life" (*English Songs*, I, p. xc, note; II, p. 380, note.) This is an error. The second edition with the title altered to *Ancient Songs and Ballads, from the reign of Henry II to the Revolution* was published in two volumes, London, 1829, from the two volume manuscript in Ritson's hand which is now in the library of Mr. Perry.

⁴¹Sir John Hawkins, *History of Music*, London, 1776, Vol. II, p. 93, followed by Burney and Warton, dated the "Cuckoo Song" about the middle of the fifteenth century. Ritson puts the MS. "as early (at least) as 1250." *Ancient Songs*, p. 2.

⁴²*Ibid.*, pp. 88, 137.

⁴³See *English Songs*, II, p. 380 ff.; *Letters*, II, p. 231; and second edition of *Ancient Songs*.

erudition of Tyrwhitt. To combine these elements with advanced standards of editorship was as unusual in the eighteenth century as it was fortunate for the next, and the errors into which Ritson slipped were due to the limitations under which every literary pioneer labors.

The final evidence of Ritson's endeavor to please the critical student is his attempt to furnish his collection with a glossary. The study of Anglo-Saxon was then in its infancy, and Ritson had at his disposal only a few books which would aid him in glossing these early poems. He confessed regret at his inability to render the glossary more perfect and in the second edition made ample reparation for any shortcomings that may have been noticed in the first.

Ancient Songs is undoubtedly the most interesting and in many ways the most valuable of Ritson's publications. It received immediate commendation from his contemporaries⁴⁴ and has been continually praised since.⁴⁵ Not only did it afford "innocent amusement to the gay", but by presenting the valuable songs of a forgotten age it furnished future poets and historians with a storehouse of fable and tradition from which they might draw hints for their own writings.

Ritson continued his researches in the poetry of antiquity and perpetuated his fame as an accurate and conscientious editor by the publication, in 1791, of *Pieces of Ancient Popular Poetry; from authentic manuscripts, and old printed copies*. This volume, like its forerunners, exhibits a high grade of typography. The fifteen woodcuts by Thomas and John Bewick,⁴⁶ which illustrate the poems, are among the most pleasing of all those that adorn Ritson's publications. The collection is small, consisting of an ingenious preface, seven poems with brief historical introductions, and a glossary. The only ballad in the group, "The King and the Barker", described as "the undoubted original of "King Edward

⁴⁴See *Monthly Review*, Vol. XCIII, pp. 178-82.

⁴⁵See Haslewood, *Op. Cit.*, p. 15; Nicolas, *Op. Cit.*, p. XLIV; and Lowndes, *Bibliographer's Manual*. An article in *Fraser's Magazine*, Dec., 1833, makes wholesale condemnation of Ritson's works. With regard to *Ancient Songs* there is a curious inconsistency which shows the shifts to which the Reviewer is put to avoid giving any praise to Ritson. In the first place he ridicules the affectation of quaintness which caused Ritson to print his poems with Anglo-Saxon characters, whereas these have been discarded in the second edition, which he is admittedly reviewing. He then turns to the book at his elbow to lament the lack of illustrations to make the pieces "grateful either to the eye or taste", but the first edition was plentifully supplied with charming vignettes. An undivided attention to either edition of the book would destroy one or other of his objections.

⁴⁶To Thomas Bewick (1753-1828) is ascribed the restoration of wood engraving as an art in England. John Bewick (1760-95) is less noted as an engraver than his elder brother.

IV and the Tanner of Tamworth" as printed by Percy, is reproduced from the very defective copy in the Cambridge library. Joseph Frank, editor of the second edition of the collection says of it:

"Mr. Ritson intended, in any future edition, to have suppressed this piece, which was originally printed chiefly with a view to bringing to light some more accurate copy: an effect which has not been, nor is now likely to be, produced."⁴⁷

"Adam Bel" is given from Copland's black letter copy, but there is nothing in the introduction or notes to indicate that it was republished for the "insignificant purpose of immortalizing the true readings" of that editor in preference to Percy's.⁴⁸ Surely the editor may be allowed to disagree with two of the Bishop's etymologies without being stigmatized as envious. The antiquity and popularity of the piece were sufficient recommendations for its insertion. "The Life and Death of Tom Thumbe", a delightful account of the marvelous exploits of this doughty hero of childhood; "The Friere and the Boy", evidently of French extraction; "How a Merchande dyd hys wyfe Betray"; the little moral piece, "How the Wise Man taught his son"; and "The Lover's Quarrel", are all given from authentic old copies, mostly in black letter. To these was added "Sir Percy" in the second edition.

The preface to this little volume is quite illuminating. Although popular interest in old poetry was on the increase, yet Ritson still felt it necessary to apologize for these old compositions, "which will have few charms in the critical eye of a cultivated age."

"The genius which has been successfully exerted in contributing to the instruction or amusement of society in even the rudest times", he says, "is a superannuated domestic whose passed services entitled his old age to a comfortable provision and retreat; or rather, indeed, a humble friend, whose attachment in adverse circumstances demands the warm and grateful acknowledgments of prosperity."⁴⁹

It was to the humble beginnings of these "nameless bards" of antiquity that Ritson thought posterity was indebted for a Homer and a Chaucer. And this was ample reason for preserving carefully every genuine relique which could be discovered. The poems in his collection he attributed to the minstrels—men

"who made it their profession to chant or rehearse them up and down the country in the trophied hall or before the gloomy castle, and at marriages, wakes, and other festive meetings, and who, generally accompanied their strains, by no

⁴⁷*Pieces of Ancient Popular Poetry*, 2nd edition, London, 1833, p. 59.

⁴⁸See *Monthly Review*, Vol. XCIII, p. 73.

⁴⁹*Pieces of Anc. Pop. Poetry*, Pref., p. v.

means ruder than the age itself, with the tinkling of a harp, or sometimes, it is apprehended with the graces of a much humbler instrument."⁵⁰

Ritson intended this little volume to be suggestive. He was himself engaged in collecting popular poetry for future publication and expressed the hope that others might be inspired to undertake similar tasks. In addition to publishing many volumes of antiquarian interest, he rendered a distinct service to the study of medieval poetry by constantly reminding his generation of the richness of the unworked mine of antiquity. He lost no opportunity to stimulate research after the scarcely known but excellent old songs which he described as abounding "with a harmony, spirit, keenness, and natural humor, little to be expected, perhaps, in compositions of so remote a period."

Ancient Popular Poetry was presented to the world with a degree of candor and fidelity as remarkable as it was little to be experienced in similar publications of the period. What with the forgeries of Chatterton, Macpherson, Evans, and Pinkerton, and the surreptitious additions and clandestine alterations of Percy, it was deserving of no small honor to print from known and designated authorities and to notice in the margin every variation from the original which a "disuse of contractions and a systematization of punctuation" rendered necessary. This was Ritson's method. As an example of its successful application, he submitted *Ancient Popular Poetry* "to the patronage of the liberal and the candid, of those whom the artificial refinements of modern taste have not rendered totally insensible to the humble effusions of unpolished nature, and the simplicity of old times."⁵¹

At this point Ritson's work with popular poetry was temporarily interrupted by his editing *Dido; A Tragedy: as it was performed at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, with universal applause*, by Joseph Reed,

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, pp. vii-viii. Ritson's emphasis here on the character of the minstrels was a continuation of the theory advanced in the dissertation on that subject presented in *Ancient Songs* in opposition to Percy's theory. See below, Chapter VII.

⁵¹*Pieces of Anc. Pop. Poetry*, Pref., p. xiii. Although Ritson would by no means have called them "liberal and candid" beings, the reviewers were very generous in praise of his execution of a meretorious service in publishing these pieces. See *Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. LXI, p. 561 ff., and *Monthly Review*, Vol. XCII, p. 73 ff. The writer in *Fraser's Magazine*, to whom reference has already been made, condemns this, as he does all Ritson's work. There is not the slightest basis in fact for his assertion that "several of the pieces were published originally with the purpose only of gratifying Ritson's malevolence." This volume came to a second edition in 1833, and a third in 1884, but the Reviewer gives it as his "sincere opinion" that "Ritson never wrote or compiled anything worthy of a reprint." His peevish chiding at the public for admiring books which he had told them to despise, makes him a ridiculous figure.

the controversial dramatist, native of Stockton. Reed left Stockton for London in 1757; so Ritson could not have met him in Stockton excepting on a visit. There is no doubt that they saw more or less of each other in London after Ritson had gone there. Furthermore, Reed's son, John, was the intimate friend of John Baynes, one of Ritson's few close acquaintances in the Inn. Ritson respected Reed's talents and is said to have contemplated an eight-volume edition of his "Miscellanies", which he was prevented by death from preparing. The tragedy, which he saw through the press and for which he supplied a preface and some notes, was never published. It was printed in 1792 but not formally announced for publication till 1808. At this time nearly the whole impression was destroyed by fire. The few copies that were saved were purchased by a friend of Reed's and have not been traced since.⁵²

In 1792 Ritson's sister was again ill, and she died early the following year. Ritson's connection with the north in each of these years is evidenced by the publication, in the first of them, of *The North-Country Chorister; an unparalleled variety of Excellent Songs*, at Durham; and in the second, of *The Northumberland Garland; or, Newcastle Nightingale: a matchless collection of famous songs*, at Newcastle. *The North-Country Chorister* is the shortest of all the *Garlands*, consisting of six rather brief pieces supposedly the work of a Bishopric ballad-singer. The fifth and last of these little poetical collections, *The Northumberland Garland*, is the longest and in some respects the most interesting of all. Of the sixteen songs which it contains—many of them from small poets of the region, but some genuine border ballads—especial interest attaches to "The Hunting of the Cheviat". Eight years after Ritson's death there appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine*⁵³ an "Ode to Mr. Ritson, on his intended descriptive revision of the ancient ballad of 'Chevy Chase', (written near the spot) in 1791." It is accompanied by the following explanatory note:

"The purpose Mr. Ritson once entertained of publishing the above ballad with historical and topographical observations, was revoked soon after a visit he made to the north, one of the objects of which was to collect materials."

It must have been about this time that Ritson had in mind the revision of the poem, but the full design was never carried out, for the song printed in *The Northumberland Garland* has neither introduction nor notes.⁵⁴ How much superior to this copy would have been the product

⁵²See Nichols, *Lit. Anec.*, IX, p. 116 and note; Nicolas, *Op. Cit.*, p. liii.

⁵³Vol. LXXXI, p. 568.

⁵⁴Child unaccountably overlooked this publication of the A version, which antedates by three-quarters of a century the copy in Skeat's *Specimens* (1873) which he gives as its earliest appearance in print. *Op. Cit.*, III, pp. 303-15. (No. 162).

of Ritson's original design may be judged from the high commendation of Ritson given in the "Ode".

4. Wert thou, discerning Ritson, near,
Thou would'st the awful scene revere;
A scene made sacred by those rhymes,
Which thou may'st deck for latest times.
5. Thy fancy, from her store, would yield
A thousand shades to throng the field:—
And sounds create of trampling steed,
Or arrow, wing'd with deathful speed.
6. Much to the Mitred Sage [Percy] is due;
Ritson, the liberal task pursue—
And *Chevy Chase*, the pride of you,
With all its feudal spoils, restore.

These little *Garlands*, without glossary and lacking critical notes, are today of interest primarily to the local antiquary. They made a wider appeal in their own day, however. Put up in the form of the penny histories usually sold by itinerant hawkers, they met with a ready sale and soon became quite scarce. Ritson is reported to have said that these volumes sold better than any other of his various publications,⁵⁵ and although he had his customary difficulties with the publishers, he did not lose money on these books.⁵⁶ But in spite of their quick and ready sale, they were not immediately reprinted. Ritson made corrections and additions whenever the necessity was brought to his attention, but he was constantly bringing out new books and the frequent misunderstandings with his publishers prevented out-of-print books from going automatically to a reprint or a new edition.

In 1793 Ritson printed the first, and the next year the second and third, volumes of *The English Anthology*, a compilation which he had put together before 1785. With the fact of its early composition in mind, Ritson's statement in the Advertisement that it is prepared upon "a plan hitherto unattempted" can be understood. Before its appearance in print, however, *The Muse's Library* and Ellis's *Specimens* had been published. Ritson ought, then, to have modified his claims as a pioneer. He professes to have followed a foreign model—the French anthology⁵⁷—but he could have got nothing there but the bare plan, for that work is

⁵⁵Park in *English Songs*, I, p. xcv.

⁵⁶For trouble over *The Northumberland Garland* see *Letters*, II, p. 129 ff; and for *North-Country Chorister*, *Ibid.*, II, 221 ff.

⁵⁷*Anthologie françoise ou Chansons choisies, depuis le xiii^e siècle jusqu'à présent*, 3 vols., 1765.

a compilation of songs and music. But wherever the plan was derived, it is not a highly advantageous one in its present adaptation. Although professedly chronological, the poems are arranged in four Parts and a supplement. Part 1 gives a chronological arrangement from Wyatt to Cotton; Part 2 is devoted to poems by women; Part 3, to extracts from long pieces; and the Supplement to living authors. While the arrangement within the Parts is fairly chronological, yet the division into Parts leads to such confusion that without the "Index of Authors" one would be at a loss to find any given selection. Evidences of the absurdity of the plan are the beginning of the first volume with Wyatt, the second with Dyer, the third with Chaucer, and the placing of Mason's "Isis" at volume III, page 262, and Warton's "Triumph of Isis", which is an answer to it, at volume II, page 136. Even within the different Parts the chronology is based on the date of the poet's birth.⁵⁸ But it is the date of an author's poem, and not of his birth or death, that should be the determining factor in placing it in a collection of poetry.

In the Advertisement Ritson indulges in rather high praise of his own work. He is justified in commending it as an elegant and accurate compilation. The engravings by Stothard are pleasing, and the fidelity to the best sources in printing is characteristic of Ritson's editorship. There is here a further touch of the apologetic tone which has been noticed in the prefaces to all his collections and which was characteristic of his age. Poetry prior to the sixteenth century was denied a place in his volumes—"the nicety of the present age being ill disposed to make the necessary allowances for the uncouth diction and homely sentiments of former times." Ritson was again making an avowed appeal for popular favor, but this Advertisement is marred by a revival of his ill-natured abuse of the reviewers. His editorial labors in the various collections so far considered had been generally commended, but of the historical essays which accompanied some of them there had been much adverse criticism. Ritson failed to distinguish between the commendation of his editorial abilities and the condemnation of his controversial asperity; or, if he made the distinction, he considered the praise as mere sop. Just now he was smarting under the rather contemptuous dismissal of his third Shakespeare pamphlet, and there is no doubt that the increasing severity of his illness made him more sensitive to criticism and less capable of controlling his wrath. These circumstances combined to produce the following splenetic attack upon his critics.

⁵⁸Ritson omitted from the first volume several poets whose dates he did not know. When this information was supplied after an appeal to the public in the Advertisement, all these men were included in the later volumes—a sufficient test of his "chronological" plan.

"Nor will any person be found to rescue such things [poems before 1500] from oblivion, while the attempt exposes him to the malignant and ruffian-like attacks of some hackney scribbler or personal enemy, through the medium of one or other of two periodical publications, in which the most illiberal abuse is vented under colour of impartial criticism, and both the literary and moral character of every man who wishes to make his peculiar studies contribute to the information or amusement of society are at the mercy of a conceited pedant, or dark and cowardly assassin. The editor, at the same time, by no means, flatters himself, that either the omission of what is obscure and unintelligible, or the insertion of every thing elegant and refined, will be sufficient to protect these volumes from the rancorous malice and envenomed slander of the reviewing critic. He appeals, however, from the partial censures of a mercenary and malevolent individual, to the judgment and candour of a generous and discerning public, whose approbation is proposed as the sole reward of his disinterested labours."⁵⁹

This venomous tirade may have been suggested partially by a feeling, which all his proud claims for the work were not able wholly to repress, that it would not be highly successful. The "discerning public" did not call for the second edition which he began preparing,⁶⁰ and the reviewers considered it as only one more book.⁶¹ While it contains a wealth of poetry, the pieces are not skillfully arranged and the work as a whole duplicates individual authors in many cases and collections in others.

By this time Ritson's nervous derangement had become so serious as to interfere vitally with his literary labors. He continued to publish material which he had been working on for years and had nearly ready for the press, but new projects were not undertaken with his customary alacrity. Some time in 1792 he had borrowed from Harrison his manuscript of the *Memoirs of Captain John Hodgson* (d. 1684) with the intention of transcribing it for publication. On December 26 of that year he wrote to Harrison:

"I must with shame confess that I have not yet begun the transcript of 'Captain Hodgson's Memoirs', and that it is owing much more to want of inclination than to want of leisure."⁶²

On July 21, 1794, he returned the manuscript,

"which I have carefully transcribed, but dare not yet venture to put to press, being already in advance, one way or another, above five hundred pounds; a good part of which, I begin to fear, will never find its way back."⁶³

Just how much editing Ritson had done or intended to do on this work

⁵⁹*Eng. Anthology*, Advertisement, pp. v-vi.

⁶⁰See *Letters*, II, p. 26.

⁶¹See *British Critic*, Vol. I, pp. 95-7; *Critical Review*, Vol. X, pp. 196-9; Vol. XII, pp. 412-13; *Monthly Review*, Vol. XCVI, p. 125; Vol. XCVIII, pp. 229-30.

⁶²*Letters*, II, p. 26.

⁶³*Ibid.*, II, p. 54.

is not known. Nothing has been said about his concern with it. When Scott published the *Memoirs* with those of Sir Henry Slingsby, in 1806,⁶⁴ he included Ritson's Advertisement, but there is no indication that he made use of Ritson's transcript. In the Advertisement Ritson declared it to be his opinion that in point of importance, interest, and even pleasantry, Hodgson's narrative was infinitely superior to Defoe's *Memoirs of a Cavalier*, although other critics have been less enthusiastic in their praise.⁶⁵

In the Preface to *English Songs* Ritson justified the "careful omission" of Scottish songs from that collection by the promise of the publication of "a much better and more perfect collection of songs *entirely* Scottish, than any that has been hitherto attempted."⁶⁶ Neither is the part played by the Scottish muse in the development of national song mentioned in the historical dissertation, for "an accurate investigation and ample discussion of this curious and important subject is intended for a future opportunity."⁶⁷ The collection begun thus early received the intermittent attention of years and was the slow product of long labor.

It is impossible to say when Ritson's interest in Scottish history and poetry began. Reared, as he was, in the extreme north of England, the influence of Scottish tradition must have been felt very early. On his first visit to Edinburgh, at the age of twenty, he purchased a volume of Scottish poems and several histories and from that time on seemed almost equally interested in Scottish and English antiquities. From London his annual vacation tours to Stockton often carried him over into Scotland. Especially from 1786 to 1790 was he concerned with the history of the northern kingdom. Besides the information gathered on his own expeditions into the north, he acquired valuable material from friends more advantageously situated than himself. These men he kept constantly informed of his discoveries and of the general progress of his book. As early as 1788 it was commonly known that he was engaged upon this collection, and it seems that he even entertained some hope of publishing it in the winter of that year.⁶⁸ The actual printing of the work, however, was not begun till June, 1790,⁶⁹ and then it dragged

⁶⁴*Original Memoirs written during the great Civil War; being the life of Sir H. Slingsby, and memoirs of Capt. Hodgson. With notes &c., by Sir Walter Scott. Edinburgh, 1806.*

⁶⁵See Nichols, *Lit. Anec.*, IX, p. 686; Lockhart's *Life of Scott*, Vol. III, p. 2; Carlyle's *Oliver Cromwell*, Vol. I, p. 333.

⁶⁶*Eng. Songs*, Pref., p. viii.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, *Hist. Essay*, p. xciii.

⁶⁸Walker to Percy, *Lit. Anec.*, VII, p. 709.

⁶⁹*Letters*, I, pp. 164-68.

on so slowly that Ritson could "form no possible idea of its being completed", and exclaimed that his bookseller was born to plague him.⁷⁰ During the next four years, while a part of the material was at the printer's, he continued his sometimes futile efforts to gather more songs and to verify the words and music of those already in his possession. In this endeavor he was materially aided by his old friends Walker, Harrison, and Shield, who corrected much of the music, and by Herd⁷¹ and Alexander Campbell,⁷² whose acquaintance he made because of a common interest in Scottish poetry. His stock of material increased so rapidly that in 1793 he was able to say (without exaggeration, as the catalogue of his library proves), that he possessed "almost every volume of Scottish poetry, ancient and modern, hitherto printed", and was "nearly as perfect in Scottish history".⁷³ After a satisfactory adjustment of difficulties with his engravers, Ritson hoped for the publication of his collection by Christmas, 1793, and began to take steps for its advance sale. The following letter is typical of his interests at this time.

MS. Laing II. 124.

No. 104	Case ⁷⁴
x435	Dissertatio ⁷⁵
603	Tristan ⁷⁶
808}	
809}	Hailes ⁷⁷

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, I, p. 187.

⁷¹Laing introduced Ritson and Herd, and they exchanged ideas about Scottish poetry. *Ibid.*, II, p. 142.

⁷²Campbell (1764-1824) corrected Ritson's version of *Lesly's March*. *Ibid.*, I, p. 219.

⁷³*Ibid.*, II, p. 2.

⁷⁴The titles and numbers which stand at the head of this letter have evidently been taken from the bookseller's catalogue, and it is impossible to trace them down with absolute certainty. Only one of the entire list appears in the catalogue of the sale of Ritson's library; so it would seem that his fear that most of them were already disposed of when he wrote had been well founded. "Case" probably refers to John Case's *Angelical Guide, shewing men and women their lott or chance in this elementary life in IV books*, 1697, in which Ritson would have been interested because of his sceptical philosophy.

⁷⁵British Museum catalogue lists 33 titles beginning with *Dissertatio* and antedating this letter. The most of them deal with affairs of the Church, and it is impossible to determine to which one, if to any, Ritson alludes.

⁷⁶Probably one of the versions of the Tristan saga: by Gast, Paris, 1520, 1533; by Mangin, Lyon, 1577, Paris, 1586; or by Thessen, Paris, 1781, 1787.

⁷⁷Ritson left annotated copies of Sir David Dalrymple, Lord Hailes's *Annals of Scotland from Malcolm III to Robert I*, and from *Robert I to the House of Stuart*, 1776. See also *Letters*, II, p. 47.

903 A proper project⁷⁸
 x2413 Noble⁷⁹
 x2619 Colville⁸⁰
 5655 Sibbaldi⁸¹

Gray's Inn, 20th Novr. 1793.

My good friend,

I have purposed writing to you for some time, but as you would have got nothing by it, you will think it just as well perhaps that i have deferred my letter till it became productive of some little advantage. I am vexed, at the same time, that i could not write yesterday, as most likely such of the above numbers as i wish most to see are already disposed of. I dare not mention Sibbald, as in the first place i suspect it *not* to be complete, and secondly, i am terrified at the idea of your unexpressed & inconceivable charge. You may put up the few articles you send me (if not too late) in Egerton's⁸² parcel; & i will pay the charge into your account with them. I will also pay them if agreeable to you, the sum of ten guineas which you will be so good as to pay over to Mr. Allan to whom i write by this post. My book is nearly ready for publication, & will certainly appear by or about Christmas. I have not taken the liberty to put your name to it, for which, I take it, on a perusal of the introduction, you will think yourself not a little obliged to me.⁸³ I cannot easily reconcile your assurance of the sale of a number of copies with your indetermination to take one. The expense of sending a parcel to Edinburgh

⁷⁸This may allude to one of the numerous "Projects" of the time.

⁷⁹Probably either the *Genealogical History of the Royal Families of Europe*, 1781, or *Memoirs of the Protectoral House of Cromwell*, 1784 and 1787, or both, by Mark Noble (1754-1827). Ritson was interested in royal genealogies and had himself published privately a *Table of the Descent of the English Crown*, 1778. Furthermore, both editions of Noble's second work had been severely criticized by Ritson's friend, Richard Gough, in the preface to his *Short Genealogical View of the Family of Oliver Cromwell*, 1785, and in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, June, 1787, p. 516. See *Lit. Anec.*, VIII, p. 133, note.

⁸⁰The *Poetical Works* of Robert Colvill, minor Scottish poet, appeared in 1789.

⁸¹Sir Robert Sibbald (1641-1712), chiefly noted for his *History of Fife*, 1710, wrote a great number of treatises on antiquarian subjects for the Royal Society. These were published in 1739 as *A Collection of Several Treatises in folio, concerning Scotland, as it was of old, and also in later times*. On July 30, 1793, Ritson wrote to Laing for a copy of Sibbald's *Works*, which was to be purchased from the library of James Cumyng. See *Letters*, II, p. 19.

⁸²T. and J. Egerton, London booksellers, published Ritson's *English Anthology*, and *Scottish Songs*.

⁸³In the "Historical Essay" the Scottish literati are condemned as the world's most notorious forgers. Ritson somehow acquired, or was possessed of an inherent dislike of the Scotch. He always questioned their integrity and on one occasion remarked, "The character given of Scottish men by old surly Johnson was, generally speaking, far from unjust. They prefer anything to truth, when the latter is at all injurious to the national honour: nor are they, so far as I can perceive, very solicitous about it on any occasion." *Letters*, I, p. 191.

may be no great object, but to have it returned entire is what i should not like: so if you will answer for 50 i will send you 100, if 25, 50, if 10, 20, if 5, 10, if none, not one, *sat verbum*.⁸⁴

I am much obliged to Mr. Brown,⁸⁵ & request whenever you meet him you will exert your eloquence in remembering my friendship & respect. I am much chagrined at the fate of my King Charles spurs, which were really curious,⁸⁶ as well as at the loss of Mr. Paton's parcel. Please to present my best compliments to that worthy man & say that i mean to have the pleasure of writing to him in a little time. I must give up, i find, all expectation of becoming acquainted with the old volume which has given all of us so much trouble. I sometimes think of addressing myself directly to the dean, but "the insolence of office" would most probably prevent him from paying any attention to my request.⁸⁷

Pray why have i never heard anything further of the Edinburgh catalogue?⁸⁸ It would be of great use to me in a work i am now amused with; & which i mean to be a kind of a sort of a Scottish library of historians & poets.⁸⁹ In this, which i think i must come down to finish & print in Edinburgh, you would be of no little service. Who or what is Robert Colville? Can you get me the two (or more) poems he has published?

I am,

Mr. Wm. Laing,

Bookseller,

Chessel's Buildings

Canongate

Edinburgh.

Your sincere friend &
well-wisher,

J. Ritson.

⁸⁴Despite this ultimatum, in March, 1794, Ritson sent Laing 50 copies of the work, with the following directions as to their disposal: "Twelve you take yourself; five you will present, with the Editor's compliments, to Mr. Fraser Tytler, Mr. Allan, Mr. Brown, Mr. Paton, and Mr. Campbell—that is one to each; the rest you will sell on my account, if you can. The expense of advertising once or twice in the Edinburgh papers I must of course be debited with. You will scarcely believe that the publication of these two small and unfortunately unequal volumes stands me in three hundred pounds. I make up my mind of course, to a considerable loss." *Letters*, II, p. 47.

⁸⁵Alexander Brown, librarian of the Advocates' Library. See *Letters*, II, p. 21.

⁸⁶Ritson had sent to James Cumyng, Secretary of the Society of Antiquaries of Edinburgh, his rare King Charles's spurs, as a gift to the Society. Upon Cumyng's death, early in 1793, his entire library was purchased by Laing. After repeated inquiry Ritson learned that the spurs had been lost in transferring the property. See *Letters*, II, p. 21 ff.

⁸⁷This refers to an "old volume of Tracts" which Tytler had drawn from the Advocates' Library, and from which Ritson wished especially a transcript of the "six first lines of Robin Hood". See *Letters*, II, pp. 4, 21; *Archibald Constable and his Literary Correspondents*, London, 1873, Vol. I, pp. 505, 509.

⁸⁸Ritson suggested to Laing, who was noted for his catalogues, that he make a complete compilation of books published in Scotland, and offered his own ideas as to the best method of procedure. See *Letters*, II, pp. 38, 48.

But it was not until March, 1794, that the long-delayed edition of *Scotish Songs* appeared in two volumes. It is easily perceived to be complementary to *English Songs*. There is a prefatory "Historical Essay on Scottish Song" in which Ritson indulges in further unseemly slurs on Percy and begins a systematic attack upon what he dubs Pinkerton's "Scotish system". The songs are arranged in four classes: I. Love; II. Comic; III. Historical, Political, and Martial; IV. Romantic and Legandary, or Ballads. As Ritson declared it his belief, with Tytler, that "the words and melody of a Scottish song should be ever inseparable",⁹⁰ he has accompanied the verses in this collection with the musical notation wherever the combined ingenuity and labor of himself and Shield were able to discover or to reconstruct it. When the music was irreparably lost, the bars are printed so that the notes can be inserted with a pen if they are recovered. The critical comments evince a wide and intimate acquaintance with Scottish history and reveal interesting anecdotes concerning the subjects of the songs. The collection itself is rather disappointing. Nearly all the songs had previously appeared in print, and many of them were so easily accessible as to cause surprise at their republication.⁹¹ There appears here some ground for the criticism frequently levelled against Ritson that he reprinted many pieces solely in order to expose the errors of previous editors. In *Scotish Songs* he had much to say about the errors, both wilful and unconscious, of his predecessors. He was frequently vituperative and seldom charitable. The most thoroughly depreciative article appeared in the *Critical Review* for January, 1795. Ritson is there declared to be "immodest", "inaccurate", and "unscholarly". He is ridiculed for attempting to give serious consideration to such inconsequential things as ballads and is accused of sparing no pains "to reject any improvement, and to restore them to error and imperfection." "To us who are accustomed to treat trifles as trifles", exclaims the Reviewer, "what must appear to be the power of that mind which can descant with such dignity on the ballad?" Here is the poetic judgment of Pre-Reliquan days opposing itself to the new light of Romanticism. The knowledge that Pinkerton himself was the author

⁸⁹"Bibliographia Scotica", See Chapter VI.

⁹⁰*Scotish Songs*, Pref., p. i. See William Tytler's *Dissertation on the Scottish Music*.

⁹¹Forty-six of the songs are taken from *Ancient and Modern Scottish Songs, heroic ballads, etc.*, forty-two from Ramsay's *Teatable Miscellany*; fourteen from Johnson's *Scots Musical Museum*; six from Percy's *Reliques*; and the remainder from ancient manuscripts and editions of the various author's poems.

of this Review,⁹² gives it less the character of a reflection of the critical spirit of the age and more that of a defence of personal conduct. Both Percy and Pinkerton felt the lash of Ritson's denunciation for deceiving the public by presenting modern compositions in the guise of antiquity and for augmenting ancient sources with verses of their own without complimenting the reader's intelligence by distinguishing between the old and the new. This spirit of carping criticism and fault-finding was denounced by the reviewers as it had been in the earlier volumes on Shakespeare. But Pinkerton's attitude was not wholly representative of the times.⁹³ Ballads were not universally considered as inconsequential things. If the spirit of the age had been so opposed to pieces of ancient popular poetry and so prejudiced in favor of the polished poems of modern composers as the apologetic tone of the prefaces to the numerous editions of old poems would lead one to suspect, those very editions would not have been so numerous. That they continued to be produced and to be received with favor is the best proof of the real feeling of the time toward them.

Ritson now turned his attention from general collections of poetry to the remains of an unknown poet of antiquity. In 1795 he issued "*Poems on interesting events in the reign of King Edward III. written Anno MCCCLII, by Laurence Minot, with a preface, dissertations, notes, and glossary.*" Prior to this time Minot was all but unknown. He is not mentioned by Leland, Bale, Pits, or Tanner. The first reference to him is in a note to the "Essay on the learning and versification of Chaucer", in which Tyrwhitt alludes to the discovery of the poems of one Laurence Minot in MS. Galba E. ix. of the Cottonian collection.⁹⁴ After Minot's name was brought to light in that brief notice a copy of the poems was transmitted to Warton for his *History of English Poetry*, in the third volume of which they are printed with neither scrupulous care nor unfailing accuracy.⁹⁵ It remained for Ritson to edit the manuscript with a degree of faithfulness and care worthy the student of Middle English poetry.

Although he was pioneering in his edition of Minot, Ritson went at his task in a thoroughly scholarly fashion. His text follows the manu-

⁹²Ritson suspected the authorship from the first. See *Letters*, II, p. 67. This article is reprinted in *Letters from Joseph Ritson to George Paton*, Edinburgh, 1829, as "A critique by John Pinkerton upon Ritson's Scottish Songs."

⁹³See the favorable review in *British Critic*, Vol. V, pp. 490-502.

⁹⁴Thomas Tyrwhitt, *The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer*, Oxford, 1775.

⁹⁵Although some of the errors in Warton's edition were undoubtedly due to his copyist, Ritson saw fit to sneer at the historian's indolence and ignorance. See *Minot's Poems*, Pref., p. viii.

script closely and accurately except that for some unexplained reason he omits the fourth of the eleven poems—the only one of the group which lacks a descriptive couplet heading. The second edition is practically a reprint,⁹⁶ and modern editors have found few errors of transcription. Ritson's notes are mostly historical in character and are chiefly taken from Berner's translation of Froissart and from the *Chronicles* of Fabin, Holinshed, and Stow. They are not mere citations or clippings from authority but are illustrated with his own vast and intimate knowledge, which serves often to correct and to supplement the ancient writers. Upon two points of importance he enlarged so freely that the material became too bulky for notes and was transferred to the beginning of the book as introductory dissertations, "On the Scottish Wars of King Edward III.," and "On the title of King Edward III. to the Crown of France." The glossary is necessarily incomplete, as many words were here encountered for the first time and required further investigation. Of his inability to make the glossary exhaustive Ritson remarked: "It seems no part of an editor's duty to save his reader the trouble of guessing at the meaning of expressions for which they cannot possibly be more at a loss than he is himself."⁹⁷

On points of interest in connection with the manuscript and with the personality of Minot himself Ritson passed judgment so far as the meagreness of available material would permit. Warton dated the unique manuscript in the reign of Henry VI., Ritson in that of Richard II., but it is probably not older than the early years of the fifteenth century.⁹⁸ From obvious internal evidence Ritson placed the conclusion of the poems in 1352 and judged that, because the stirring events following that date are not celebrated, the poet did not live to see them. The later conjecture that Minot continued to write after 1352 but that his poems have been lost is less probable. There is no development of style in the poems now extant, which would seem to indicate that Minot was mature when he wrote them, and there is no reason for premising lost poems save perhaps the general tendency to believe that the medieval poetry which has been preserved represents only a small fraction of what was actually written.

⁹⁶*Poems, written anno MCCCLII by Laurence Minot. With introductory dissertations on the Scottish Wars of Edward III and on his claim to the throne of France, and notes and glossary.* London, 1825. References are to this edition.

⁹⁷*Minot's Poems*, Pref., p. xviii.

⁹⁸See Thomas Wright, *Political Poems*, London, 1859, Vol. I, p. 58; Joseph Hall, *The Poems of Laurence Minot*, Oxford, 1887, p. v; Morris and Skeat, *Specimens of Early English*, Oxford, 1873, Vol. II, p. 126; Prof. Herford's life of Minot in *Dict. Nat. Biog.*

Of Minot himself nothing is known but what may be gleaned from the poems he has left. From the prevalence of Northern dialect forms Ritson concluded the author was a native of one of the northern counties. There seems, however, to be a sufficient mingling of Midland forms to indicate that the poet was familiar with both dialects, although he was unquestionably a Northerner.

Theories as to the author's profession and position in life are equally conjectural. Without pretending to sufficient knowledge of the matter to pass final judgment, Ritson surmised that Minot may have belonged to one of the monasteries in the north. This opinion, evidently based on the religious allusions in the poems, is seconded in essence by Bierbaum,⁹⁹ who called Minot a priest. The lack of a general knowledge of Middle English poetry, with the perspective which it would have afforded, prevented Ritson from knowing that the religious references in Minot were no more numerous than was common in poetry of that period. So that it seems more probable that Minot was a soldierly minstrel who wrote and sang for the army but was also favored by the court.¹⁰⁰ Ritson, indeed, came near this view in an indirect way when he pointed out that many of the poems are written in the manner of an eye-witness who celebrates events still fresh in mind.

Minot's literary excellence lies mainly in his versification. His most frequent measure is the popular six line strophe, but he employs other forms in both rhymed and alliterative verse. He was no mean metricist, but he scarcely merits the exuberant praise bestowed upon him by Ritson:

"In point of ease, harmony, and variety of versification, as well as general perspicuity, Laurence Minot is, perhaps, equal, if not superior, to any English poet before the sixteenth, or even, with very few exceptions before the seventeenth century."¹⁰¹

In facility of rhyming and choice of words Ritson gave precedence only to Robert of Brunne and Thomas Tusser; Chaucer he excepted from all such comparisons. The enthusiasm of the discoverer is reflected in this high praise, and the handicap under which the explorer works is seen in the errors which Ritson committed in the work. But with it all his edition of Minot deserves the commendation which it received

⁹⁹Bierbaum, *Ueber Laurence Minot und seine Lieder*, 1876.

¹⁰⁰Cf. Herford, *Op. Cit.*, and B. ten Brink, *Geschichte der Englischen Literatur*. Strassburg, 1899, Vol. I, p. 375.

¹⁰¹*Minot's Poems*, Pref., p. xiv.

at the hands of his contemporaries¹⁰² and from the pens of later scholars.¹⁰³

It was naturally to be expected that a poetical antiquary who concerned himself particularly with songs and ballads should eventually take up the subject of Robin Hood. One should expect to find Robin Hood ballads in every volume of "Ancient Popular Poetry", but one looks in vain for any material concerning the border outlaw in Ritson's collection of that title. Realizing the inconsistency of the omission, he justified the procedure in the announcement that he was reserving "the poems, ballads, and historical or miscellaneous matter relating to this celebrated outlaw", for separate treatment. This promised publication made its appearance in two volumes, 1795, as *Robin Hood: a collection of all the ancient poems, songs, and ballads, now extant, relative to that celebrated English Outlaw. To which are prefixed Historical Anecdotes of his Life*. It is a monument of industry, the result of years of investigation and study, and brings to a fitting close the first period of Ritson's editorial activity.

The Life of Robin Hood, with which the first volume opens, does not profess to be historically authentic. Although Ritson considered Robin Hood as an historical character, he was unable to ground his biography on unassailable authorities. He had recourse to the Robin Hood legends, anecdotes, and allusions in the manuscripts and printed works of numerous ancient and modern writers, and from these he constructed a history "which, though it may fail to satisfy, may possibly serve to amuse." The Life is short, covering only twelve pages; but there are a hundred and fifteen pages of "Notes and Illustrations." In this section of the work are to be found valuable contributions to the store of Robin Hood information. Ritson took most of the "facts" of the Life from the prose manuscript in the Sloane library in which Robin Hood is given definite dates, but he supplemented this by frequent quotations from other early writers. In addition he has constructed a chronology from 1593 to 1784 of the dramatic exhibitions in which Robin Hood's exploits are recounted, has listed the Robin Hood ballads and songs and the collections of them from the fourteenth century to the *Reliques*, and has given a number of Robin Hood proverbs. The bringing into one view of this vast store of material was a meritorious service; and in spite of the outcropping of Ritson's scurrility in disrespectful allusions to Christianity and in spiteful reference to other editors, it is not to be ignored by the student of Robin Hood.

¹⁰²Cf. *Monthly Review*, Vol. CII, p. 464; *British Critic*, Vol. IX, p. 22; *Dibden's Director*, Vol. I, p. 88.

¹⁰³See any of the writers cited above.

As for the remainder of the work, the first volume contains five songs and the second twenty-eight, each with a brief introduction on the source of the text and the copies with which it was collated. Although twenty-six of the ballads had appeared in Evans's *Old Ballads*¹⁰⁴ in the order given here, Ritson prints them from older sources, usually black letter copies in the collection of Anthony à Wood. To Ritson's collection Child was able to add only five ballads. Of these "The Bold Pedlar and Robin Hood" was known by Ritson to exist, although there is no proof that he knew it before his collection went to press. It is probable that this information was furnished by Scott, who seems to have promised to get a copy of the ballad for him.¹⁰⁵ In the introduction to the first edition Ritson printed a fragment of "Robin Hood and the Monk" and expressed his regret that the whole was no longer extant. The ballad was given in full in the Appendix to the second edition, 1832, the editor of which says its existence was unknown to Ritson. The three remaining pieces, "Robin Hood and the Pedlars", "Robin Hood and the Scotchman", "Robin Hood, Will Scarlet, and Little John", were not known to Ritson.

Ritson was accused of allowing his antiquarian zeal to overrun his critical acumen because he included in his collection pieces which had little but their antiquity to recommend them.¹⁰⁶ Scott, as late as 1830, took him to task for encumbering his pages with such ballads as "Robin Hood and the Tinker", "Robin Hood and the Butcher", Robin Hood and the Tanner", which were, at best, scarcely more than variations on a single theme; and he said that this collection illustrated at once the excellencies and the defects of Ritson's editorial system—the excellencies in care, accuracy, wide research, etc.; the defects in including whatever was old.¹⁰⁷ It is true that by paying attention rather to the age of his selections than to their poetic merit Ritson missed the appeal to popular favor which had been a large element in the success of the *Reliques* and was later to play a considerable part in the popularity of the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*. But while he may be open to the censure of those who seek only pleasant reading, Ritson performed a noteworthy service for scholarship by gathering together all the scattered allusions to Robin Hood and collecting into one compass the various poems relating to the outlaw.¹⁰⁸ The standards of scholarly editorship

¹⁰⁴Thomas Evans, *Old Ballads, historical and narrative, with some of modern date*. 2 vols. London, 1777.

¹⁰⁵*Letters*, II, pp. 220, 241.

¹⁰⁶See *British Critic*, Vol. IX, pp. 16-22; *Fraser's Magazine*, Vol. VIII, p. 717.

¹⁰⁷*Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, ed. Henderson, Edinburgh and London, 1902. Vol. I, p. 46.

¹⁰⁸Later editors have been rather chary in their acknowledgment of indebted-

which he set up for himself were then pointed to as blemishes on an otherwise excellent production, but half a century later they received due praise when exemplified by the labors of Child in the ballad field.

ness to Ritson. J. M. Gutch declares that the Historical Essay in his *Lytell Geste of Robin Hode*, 2 vols., London, 1847, is "not grounded on the documents used by Ritson." Yet, despite this asseveration, he reprints almost the whole of Ritson without additions.

CHAPTER VI.

EDITORIAL LABORS AFTER 1795

Increasing illness halts publication—Enhances eccentricities—*Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food*—Letter to Chalmers—MS. "Gleanings of Grammar" and "Dictionary"—Supplies material for Brewster's *History of Stockton*—Forms new friendships—Sir Walter Scott seeks his aid—Their correspondence—MS. "Scottish Ballads"—Letter on "Sir Tristrem"—Begins again to publish—*Bibliographia Poetica*—Assisted by Douce and Park—Comments on Lydgate and "Piers Plowman"—MS. "Bibliographia Scotica"—*Metrical Romancees*—Contents—Reception—*Caledonian Muse*—Partly printed in 1785—Its subsequent history—Triphook's letter—MS. "Select Scottish Poems"—*Life of King Arthur*—Purpose—*Memoirs of the Celts—Annals of the Caledonians*—Preparation and object—Nature—*Fairy Tales*—Blemishes—Contents—Summary of editorial labors.

The abrupt cessation of Ritson's publications in 1795 was undoubtedly the result of the increasing malignancy of the illness of which he had first complained in 1790. By this time he had become so deranged nervously that writing was attended with great difficulty. He neglected his correspondence and pleaded his illness as an excuse which ought to make him the object of the commiseration of his friends rather than of their resentment. The exact nature of his ailment is difficult to determine. It was not, he said, a fever or a consumption. To all outward appearances he was as healthy as ever. But he complained of increasing forgetfulness in small matters and feared the complete loss of his memory. Friends suggested various remedies, none of which he saw fit to try. His physician advised him that his only hope for anything like permanent relief lay in a complete rest in unfamiliar surroundings. But he could not persuade himself to spare the time and undergo the expense incident to a long sojourn in the country and was content with the brief outings afforded by his annual vacations. The temporary diminution of his distress which these vacations induced was sufficient to enable him to prolong his mental activity, but he realized that he was losing ground rapidly and in 1801 expressed surprise that he had already lived so long.¹

The neurological character of Ritson's illness increased his sensitiveness, gave him an exaggerated conception of his own importance, and caused him to guard jealously the eccentricities which set him off from the generality of mankind.² The revolutionary ardor in politics which was greatly stimulated by his visit to France in 1791 continued with

¹*Letters*, II, p. 205.

²These characteristics are more fully discussed in Chapter VIII.

unabated fervor. He persisted in his vegetarian diet and became so enthusiastic in his endeavors to secure converts to his theory that he issued *An Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food as a Moral Duty*, 1802, as conclusive evidence of the invulnerability of his position. The eccentric theory of orthography which he had first practised in the *Versees* and early propounded in the Shakespeare pamphlets, attracted his attention in these later years. Now he began in earnest the attempt which he had earlier suggested, to reform the whole system of English orthography. This ambitious undertaking brought no fruit in the form of published material, but he seems to have been prevented from putting it to press only by the state of his health and his pocket. His work took shape in three manuscripts, all of which have apparently been destroyed. Something of the nature of his method may be gained from the following letter to Chalmers, in which he seeks to borrow a number of sixteenth century grammars and orthographies. However eccentric his theories may have appeared in his own day, he sought to ground them on authority, and in true antiquarian style he went to the remote past for that authority.

Montagu d. 15, fol. 216, 218.

1. Derickes Image of Ireland, 1581.³
2. Bellots English Schoolmaster, 1579.⁴
3. Bullokars Orthographie, 1580.⁵
4. Mulcasters Elementarie, 1582.⁶
5. Grammatica Anglicana, 1594.⁷

³John Derrick's *Image of Ireland*, in two parts, written in 1578, published 1581, was reprinted with notes by Sir Walter Scott in *Somers Tracts*, 1809, and a limited edition was put out by John Small in 1883. The full title of this book, containing 153 words, is given in Ritson's *Bibliographia Poetica*, pp. 186-7. See also *Letters*, II, p. 148.

⁴The only copy known to exist of Jacques Bellot's *The Englishe Scholemaister: Conteyning many profitable precepts for the naturall borne French men, and other straungers that have their French tongue, to attayne the true pronouncing of the Englishe tongue*, London, 1580, is that preserved at the Hofbibliothek in Darmstadt. It was edited, with a reproduction of the original title page, by Theo. Spira as Vol. VII of *Neudrucke frühneuenglischen Grammatiken*, Halle, 1912.

⁵William Bullokar published in 1580 *Booke at Large for the Amendment of Orthographie for English Speech*. This was followed by two other books dealing with similar subjects. All three were published by Max Plessow in *Geschichte der Fabeldictung in England bis zu John Gay*, Berlin, 1906.

⁶Richard Mulcaster, *First Part of the Elementarie, which entreateth chefelie of the right Writing of our English Tung*, 1582. No second part is known to have appeared; the first has never been reprinted.

⁷*Grammatica Anglicana, praecipue quatenus à Latina differt, ad unicam P. Rami methodum concinnata, etc.*, 1594. Hrsg. von M. Rösler und R. Brotanek. Announced in 1905 for publication in *Neudrucke frühneuenglischen Grammatiken*, but it has not yet appeared.

6. Spensers Three Letters, 1594.⁸

7. Blages Wise conceytes, 1569.⁹

Dear Sir,

If the books mentioned in the inclosed paper be in your own library, as I presume they are, I shall be highly gratified by the perusal of such of them as you can conveniently spare. They shall be treated with care, & returned with expedition.

Yours respectfully

J Ritson

Monday, 6th Feb.

1797.

George Chalmers, Esq.

The result of his labors through a great many years with these and numerous like volumes was the three manuscripts already mentioned. The "Dissertation on the use of Self" was the formulization of his ideas regarding the use of "self" as a substantive, which resulted in his own frequent use of "hissself", "herself", etc. "Gleanings of English Grammar, chiefly with a view to illustrate and establish a just system of orthography, upon etymological principles" probably took the nature of a dissertation explanatory of the more elaborate project which he described as an "orthographico-etymological dictionary of the English language." Besides the formal defense of his own theories of orthography there are several references in his letters to the inadequacy of existing lexicographies. Johnson's dictionary he declared to contain the "strangest mixture of ignorance and idleness that was ever exhibited in such a work". He ridiculed Croft's¹⁰ pretentious attempt to "correct all Johnson's errors, supply all his defects, and produce the most finished and perfect specimen of lexicography that has ever appeared in any language or in any country."¹¹ As early as 1793 Ritson began the preparation of his own dictionary but "for want of vigor of mind was forced to lay it aside." He recurred to it in his later years but did not complete it, although the manuscript was described in his sale catalogue as "intended for publication."

During this non-productive period Ritson was devoting as much time and energy to his favorite pursuits as the state of his health would

⁸Edmund Spenser, *Three proper and wittie, familiar Letters: lately passed between two university men: touching the earthquake in April last, and our English reformed versifying*, London, 1580.

⁹Thomas Blage, *Schole of Wise Conceytes*, a book of Aesopian fables.

¹⁰Sir Herbert Croft (1751-1816) busied himself with the preparation of an English dictionary from 1786 or 1787 until 1793, when he was forced to abandon it for want of subscribers. He seems to have had no clear calling to the task in hand.

¹¹*Letters*, I, p. 213.

permit. His reputation as an antiquary and as a student of the older forms of poetry caused his old friends to call upon him frequently for assistance in their various undertakings and led to the formation of new friendships with men of kindred interests. He was himself constantly seeking here and there for additional material for the projects he had in hand and asking verification of conclusions on the meaning of words and the dates of pieces of poetry. With Paton, Walker, Harrison, Chalmers, and others he continued his correspondence on literary subjects, though with less regularity than formerly. Knowing of Ritson's early concern with and his continued interest in the antiquities of his native town, John Brewster, clergyman at Stockton, sought his aid in compiling material for his *Parochial History and Antiquities of Stockton-upon-Tees*, published in 1796. Ritson furnished a great part of the material for this volume but afterward expressed regret that he had done so because Brewster had handled it in a woefully unintelligent manner.¹²

The enlarging of the circle of his friendships proved very beneficial to Ritson. With David Macpherson (1746-1816) he exchanged Scottish etymologies, and although himself in keenly distressing circumstances he offered Macpherson real encouragement in the latter's difficulties.¹³ He received valuable assistance in translating from Robert Surtees¹⁴ and found himself indebted to William Laing for repeated aid in obtaining scarce volumes.¹⁵ The greatest boon, however, came when he made the acquaintance of Sir Walter Scott.

In 1800, or thereabouts,¹⁶ Scott applied to Ritson for aid in compiling materials for his projected *Border Minstrelsy*. He had previously appealed to Percy, but the prelate expressed only a mild interest in the undertaking. After a period of hesitation induced by Ritson's avowed hatred of Scotchmen and the known virulence of his lan-

¹²*Ibid.*, II, pp. 125, 127. See Henry Heavisides, *Annals of Stockton-on-Tees; with biographical notices*, Stockton-on-Tees, 1865, for curious anecdotes regarding Brewster's ignorance of antiquities.

It was probably during this same period that Ritson made some progress toward a life of Wharton. His copy of *The Life and Writings of Philip late Duke of Wharton*, 2 vols., London, 1732, which included the *Memoirs of the Life of his Grace Philip late Duke of Wharton*, By an Impartial Hand, London, 1731, interleaved with copious manuscript notes and supplied with transcripts of several of the Duke's poems furnished with notes, is in Mr. Perry's collection.

¹³*Letters*, II, p. 197.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, II, p. 241.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, *passim*.

¹⁶The exact date is unknown. Lockhart places the beginning of the correspondence in 1800-01. *Life of Scott*, II, p. 54.

guage toward those he disliked, and against the advice of Ellis, Scott decided to seek Ritson's aid.¹⁷ Apparently to the surprise of himself and his friends he met with "the readiest, kindest, and most liberal assistance."¹⁸ His suave courtesy, his frank praise of Ritson's industry and accuracy, his unflinching tact in avoiding everything suggestive of a controversy completely disarmed Ritson and led him to communicate the stores of his valuable learning in a gracious and friendly manner. The correspondence thus begun continued uninterruptedly throughout the remaining years of Ritson's life and was supplemented by at least one pleasant personal meeting. In the autumn of 1802 Ritson visited Scott at Lasswade cottage. Dr. John Leyden, the crude Scottish poet, was present on this occasion and by his rudeness of manner somewhat irritated the more delicate sensibilities of Ritson. Despite this unpleasant circumstance, Ritson treasured the memory of the visit among his most delightful recollections and hoped constantly for an opportunity to repeat it. Lockhart's ill-natured abuse of Ritson on the occasion of this visit has given rise to a misunderstanding of the nature of the relationship between him and his two Scottish friends.¹⁹ There was no permanent breach between him and Leyden. He frequently spoke in praise of his "inestimable friend" Leyden, and seems to have forgotten entirely their early unpleasantness. Of his connection with Scott there can be no doubt. Not only his own letters but Scott's frequently repeated praise prove them to have been on constantly friendly terms.

The extant correspondence proves Scott and Ritson to have been mutually helpful in their respective compilations. Despite his illness, Ritson reveals in these letters an unsubdued zeal for his work, and his manner is always deferential and unassuming. He seems to feel that he has at last met his superior in medieval learning. When he received a copy of the first edition of the *Minstrelsy* he thanked Scott in glowing terms for "the most curious and valuable literary treasure I possess. Everything is excellent throughout, both in verse and prose." He declared his intention of reading it charily, one ballad a day, thus extending his "exquisite gratification to the most distant period."²⁰ It was with obvious hesitation that he ventured to suggest a "few trifling remarks, in contemplation of a second edition."²² Had the *Minstrelsy* con-

¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁸Scott's statement quoted by Surtees, *Op. Cit.*, III, p. 194, note q.

¹⁹See Lockhart, *Op. Cit.*, I, pp. 330, 358; *Encyc. Brit.*, art. "Ritson"; *British Critic*, Vol. LV, pp. 581-93; *Constable and his Literary Correspondents*, I, pp. 495-7.

²⁰*Letters*, II, p. 222 ff.; Surtees, *Op. Cit.*, III, p. 194, note r.

²¹Although everything he wrote was in high praise of the *Minstrelsy*, yet Ritson felt that Scott had taken unfair advantage of him by printing from the Brown MS. several ballads which he had himself transcribed with the full knowl-

tained a copy of "Sir Tristrem", as Scott originally intended it should, Ritson would no doubt have had some very pertinent remarks to make on it. For it appears from the following hitherto unnoticed letter that, even before the completion of the *Minstrelsy*, Ritson had discovered the poem, made extracts from it, estimated its age and origin, propounded the most plausible theory yet advanced for a definite authorship of it, and supported his theory by all the available internal and by almost all the corroborative external evidence which the subsequent century of scholarly investigation has sufficed to unearth.

To the question of the authorship of "Sir Tristrem" there has not been, and probably can never be, a definitive answer. The theory held by Ritson and propounded by Scott (in his edition of 1804) that the "Thomas" mentioned in the first lines of the romance was in all probability its author, was too simple to go long unchallenged. In their anxiety to prove all things scholars have explored the hidden, labyrinthian paths and have been prone to ignore the plain and straight ways, if for no other reason than because they were obvious. And so, after Scott's declaration that "The Romance of *Sir Tristrem* was composed by Thomas of Erceldoune, called the Rhymer, who flourished in the thirteenth century", came the testimony of such men as Price, Wright, Paris, Hazlitt, Halliwell, Garnett, Murray, Schofield, and Kölbing to prove—not that some other person was the author of the poem, but simply that Thomas was *not* its composer. In McNeill, the latest editor of the romance, critical judgment seems to be swinging back to the common-sense position taken by Ritson and Scott. After reviewing carefully the evidence and the arguments in favor of an unknown author other than Thomas of Erceldoune, McNeill concludes thus:

"Broadly viewed, the question of the authorship of the poem is one which, from the nature of the evidence, must be answered in accordance rather with reasonable probability than with absolute demonstration; and the reasonable probability is that Robert Mannyng of Brunne was right when he ascribed the poem to Thomas of Erceldoune."²²

How ably Ritson had analyzed the available evidence is revealed in the following letter, and how thoroughly he had anticipated Scott's

edge and consent of Thomas Gordon. See manuscript of 102 pp. in Ritson's best hand, comprising fifteen ballads and a copy of a letter of Thomas Gordon to Alexander Fraser Tytler under date of January 15, 1793. To the Table of Contents Ritson has appended the following note: "Many of these ballads have been since publish'd, from the same manuscript, in 'The Minstrelsy of the Scottish-border'; whether deserve'dly, or not, i shal not now say." MS. in Mr. Perry's library.

²²G. P. McNeill, *Sir Tristrem*, Edinburgh and London, 1886, for the Scottish Text Society.

conclusions is seen upon comparison of the letter with Scott's Introduction to his *Sir Tristrem*. Just what is the degree of Scott's indebtedness to Ritson cannot now be definitely determined. The letter unfortunately bears no address. It was no doubt written to one who could and probably did communicate its contents to Scott prior to the appearance of his *Sir Tristrem* in 1804. But even though Scott knew nothing of Ritson's letter on the romance, the fact remains that Ritson antedated Scott's conclusions by nearly three years.

Laing II, 589.

Dear Sir,

The romance of Sir Tristrem, if admitted to be the production of Thomas of Ercildon, i may be well enough said to have discovered, as i know of none who had anticipated my conjecture though i have not been permitted to announce that discovery myself.²³ It is extant in a most valuable, but shockingly mutilated, MS. in the library of the faculty of advocates at Edinburg, marked W.41. and presented by the late lord Auchinleck, in 1744; its age, to the best of my judgment being about the year 1400,²⁴ and, evidently compiled and written in England.²⁵ The reasons from which i infer this imperfect romance to be the work of the ancient Scottish bard already mentioned are these: Robert of Brunne, in the prologue to his metrical version of Peter Langetoft, says,²⁶

"I see in song in sedgeyng tale
Of *Erceldoun*, & of *Kendale*,
Non tham says as thai tham wrought,
& in ther saying it seems noght.
That may thou here in *Sir Tristrem*,
Over gestes it has the steem,
Over all that is or was,
If men it sayd as made *Thomas*.

But I here it no man so say,
That of some cople is away.
So tharefare saying here beforne.

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²³Probably because of ill health holding back his publications.

²⁴Modern critical opinion places the MS. at an earlier date. Most students go with McNeill in placing it at the beginning of the 14th century; some agree with Murray in setting it at the middle of the century. Scott refers it to "the earlier part of the fourteenth century".

²⁵On this point there is no difference of opinion. On the question of the origin of the romance, Ritson would, of course, agree with the theory that the English version is from a Norman or Anglo-Norman source. He frequently contended, as did Tyrwhitt and Warton, that there exists no English romance which is not derived, directly or indirectly, from a French original.

²⁶ll, 93-104, 109-112. Scott quotes these lines.

Thai says in so *quaynte Inglis*,
 That many one wate not what is,
 Therefore heuyed wele the more
 In *strange ryme* to travayle sore."

I shall now proceed to gratify your curiosity, by a transcript of the first stanza, which will serve at the same time, to illustrate the censure of the English critick, and to ascertain the title of the Scotch poet. It runs thus:

"I was at *Ercildoun* (To supply by conjecture, what is illegible.)
 With *Thomas* spak y thare,
 Ther herd y rede in roun,
 Who *Tristrem* gat & bare,
 Who was king with croun,
 And who him fostered zare,
 And who was bold baroun,
 As thair elders ware
 Bi zere:
 Tomas telles in toun
 this aventours as thai were."

This is a specimen of such "*quaynte Inglis*", and such "*strange ryme*", as there is no other instance of; and, with the other extracts i have made from this venerable relique²⁷ (which, by the way, i had neither time nor convenience to transcribe at length), sufficiently proves, at least to my own conviction, that this is the identical poem alluded to in the above passage of Robert Mannyng. In further support of the authorship, i can also cite the fragment of an ancient romance in French metre upon the same subject, in the possession of Mr. Douce, in which the Scoto-English performance is apparently criticized under the name of *Thomas*.²⁸ The objection made, by some, against this opinion, is, that the poem speaks of *Thomas*, in the *third* person, as one from whom he states himself to have received his materials: but for this singularity (if it be one), the authors caprice must be responsible. It seems, in fact, to have been, if not the peculiar, at least the notorious practise, of this popular rimer: as in two more modern poems, always ascribed to, but not, i believe, actually written by him, he is introduced in the same manner: one of these mentioned by Lord Hailes, you most probably have in the Scottish prophecys, the other, an imperfect MS. in the Cotton library, & Lincoln cathedral, has not been printed.²⁹ Besides, Maistre Wace, more than once, speaks

²⁷They appear not to have been made use of.

²⁸The Douce fragments were edited by Francisque Michel, *Tristan: Recueil de ce qui reste des poèmes relatifs à ses aventures composés en François en Anglo-Normand et en Grec dans les xii^e et xiii^e siècles*, London, 1835, and described by A. E. Curdy, *La Folie Tristan, an Anglo-Norman Poem*, Baltimore, 1902. Scott cited extracts from the fragments (Introd., pp. 42-4) in support of the point Ritson makes here.

²⁹It was printed by Laing as "*Thomas of Ersseldoune*", in *Ancient Popular Poetry of Scotland*. Second edition revised by W. C. Hazlitt, 1895, pp. 81-111.

of himself in the same manner, tho' at other times in the first person; and this identical objection is alleged, by Bishop Watson, against the cavils of Thomas Paine, as a strong argument in favour of the four evangelists, after the example of Caesar, Xenophon, and other ancient historians:³⁰ which is all i have at present to say upon the subject. I understand, however, that some gentlemen, at Edinburgh, have transcribed the entire poem for the purpose of publication, which i should, in fact, have done myself, tho' without the like advantages, had it not been mutilated and imperfect.³¹

I put into your hands a few years ago an alphabetical list of the names of British rivers, which, if it would be of any service to you, and has already performed it, i should be obliged to you to leave for me at Egertons any time it may be convenient.³²

I am,
Dear sir,
Very respectfully & sincerely yours
J. Ritson.

Gray's inn,
26th June 1801.

When one recalls that Scott's views on the subject of ballad deception were, like those of his age, lax, and his practise even more remiss, one wonders what has become of the Ritson whose main object in life seemed to be to expose and to ridicule the liberties taken by editors of medieval poetry. That Ritson had not, at this period of life, given over his enmity to editorial laxity is evinced by his latest publications. Scott alone of all the collectors of ballads wholly escaped his ire. The poet's good fortune was undoubtedly due in large measure to the bland manner in which he treated Ritson. Scott himself, perhaps disturbed by an accusing conscience, was fearful lest Ritson should discover the extent to which he had indulged in textual liberties and attack him with his customary violence. In 1802 he wrote to Ellis:

"As for Mr. Ritson, he and I still continue on decent terms; and, in truth, he makes *patte de velours*; but I dread I shall see 'a whisker and then a claw' stretched out against my unfortunate lucubrations."³³

³⁰Richard Watson, *Apology for the Bible . . . Letters to Thomas Paine*, 1796, directed against Paine's "Second Part".

³¹This no doubt alludes to the copy which formed the basis of Scott's edition. Ritson's veneration for Scott probably led him here to underestimate his own ability as a transcriber. Had he copied the whole poem for publication it would certainly not have been less perfect than Scott's version, which, according to Köbling, swarms with errors. *Die nordische und die englische version der Tristan-saga*, Heilbronn, 1878-92.

³²This unpublished MS. is now Douce 340, in the Bodleian Library: "A list of river names in Great Britain and Ireland, with a few etymological notes on them".

³³Lockhart, *Op. Cit.*, II, p. 87.

The stimulus which came from his correspondence with men actively engaged in literary pursuits no doubt operated to revive Ritson's waning interest to the point where he began again to publish. Despite steadily declining health he managed, with great suffering, to see three books through the press in 1802 and to bring several others to completion. Each one of them is disfigured by his peculiar orthography, and all are marred by extravagances in idea and statement. The condition of his mind serves in large measure to explain if not to excuse the extreme violence which characterizes much of the language of these volumes. All the dislikes which he had earlier expressed, all the eccentricities which he had formerly exhibited, are here reiterated with the cocksureness of conceit and egotism run riot. The *Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food* has already been mentioned and will be treated later; the other two works appeared simultaneously.

Bibliographia Poetica; a catalogue of English poets of the twelfth, thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centurys, with a short account of their works, was the product of several years of labor. It was originally undertaken at the suggestion of Steevens, who was unable to fill out a list of authors' initials submitted by Thomas Park. With the assistance of "the bibliographical labors of Leland, Bale, Pits, Wood, and Tanner", the "ingenious though too frequently inaccurate *History of English Poetry*", Herbert's enlarged and improved edition of Ames's *Typographical Antiquities*, and his own transcript of the registers of the Stationers' company, "obligingly furnished by mister Chalmers",⁸⁴

⁸⁴The following letters concern the borrowing of the transcript.

Add. MSS. 22900, f. 404.

Dear Sir,

Understanding that you have purchased Mr. Herbert's transcript of the Stationers-books, I presume upon your experienced liberality to solicit the loan, for a few days, of the first volume, either now or when you can better spare it; with liberty, if you please, to extract such entries of ballads as Herbert has not already printed.

I am, Dear sir,

Very respectfully & sincerely yours

J. Ritson.

Gray's-inn,
15th. Dec. 98.
George Chalmers esquire,
Green-street.

together with numerous books and titles from the libraries of his friends,³⁵ and especially with critical suggestions from Douce and Park, Ritson worked out a catalogue surprisingly full and accurate for that day.

It would seem that Ritson entered upon the preparation of this volume in collaboration with Douce but completed it alone, using extensively the material collected by his friend. A manuscript of "Materials for a biography of English poets to the end of the sixteenth century, collected by J. R. and F. D." now in the Bodleian, is entirely in Douce's hand.³⁶ Its plan is the same as that of *Bibliographia Poetica*: the authors

Montagu d. 15, f. 220.

Gray's-inn, 20th Decem. 1798.

Dear Sir,

I return your first volume, with a thousand thanks; and flatter myself it has not been detained beyond your expectation. As you appear not to have finished your examination of the second, perhaps you could part with it more conveniently at a future time, for which I should wait with pleasure. If, however, the present be equally agreeable, you may rely on the utmost dispatch from,

Dear Sir,

Very sincerely yours,

J. Ritson

P. S. "The Clarkes booke", I perceive, wch contained the entrys from 22d July 1571 to 1576 is still missing; nor now likely, I conclude, ever to be found. Another book, with a white cover, occasionally refer'd to, is, doubtless, in the same predicament.

George Chalmers esquire, Green-street.

Add. MSS. 22901, f. 13.

Dear Sir,

I return you the concluding volumes of Mr. Herberts transcript, & shall ever retain the most grateful sense of so considerable a favor.

Upon Mr. Steevens's application to I know not what members of the stationers company, they agreed to let me have the use of these books in their own hall, but had determined, it seems, that they should no more go abroad into private hands. As the terms were inconvenient, I did not accept the offer; & have thereby had an opportunity of being much more pleaseingly indebted to your superior liberality.

I remain, Dear sir,

Your most obliged & respectful
humble servant,

J. Ritson.

Grays-inn,

29th Jany. 1799.

³⁵See S. E. Brydges, *Censura Literaria*, London, 1805-9, I, p. 54.

³⁶MS. Douce, e, 5.

are arranged alphabetically by centuries, and there is a list of English translators and a supplement. Presumably Douce undertook to arrange his own and Ritson's notes in this volume, and after their estrangement Ritson enlarged and altered Douce's material for his own published book. Apropos of the disruption of his friendship with Ritson, which resulted in breaking their collaboration on this volume, Douce wrote to Ellis:

"We have taken a formal leave of each other—under our hands and seals, probably forever. We complained of each other's cavilling and contradictory tempers, which accidentally colliding with no common violence produced the irreparable breach."⁸⁷

Ritson allowed this misunderstanding to prevent his openly acknowledging his obligations to Douce. There is, however, in the Advertisement to *Bibliographia Poetica* a veiled compliment of which Douce considers himself the subject. It reads:

"That the compilation is more extensive, accurate and minute than it otherwise could have been, is owing to the kind attention, and literary exertions, of a very learned and ingenious friend, to whom the public is not less indebted than the editor."

To this sentence, Douce, in his copy of the printed work, added: "Originally F. D.[ouce] but he [i. e. Ritson] afterwards cancelled the name from a bit of spite."

Throughout the course of *Bibliographia Poetica* there are many references to Douce, but Ritson was probably only slightly less indebted to Thomas Park, many of whose notes, signed "T. P.", are included. Park corrected Ritson's manuscripts twice and added so much valuable material that Ritson volunteered to divide the profits of the sale with him.⁸⁸ The first draft of the Preface contained a joint acknowledgment of the assistance rendered by Douce and Park, but when Ritson's altercation with Douce caused the latter's name to be stricken out, Park asked that his be omitted also. This was accordingly done, and in his ingratitude Ritson neglected even to send Park a copy of the printed work.⁸⁹

⁸⁷Add. MSS. 28099, f. 47. This letter bears no date beyond "Monday eve". That it was written later than Feb. 1, 1801, is proved by another letter of Douce to Ellis in the same MS., f. 30, which bears that date and in which Douce expresses his interest in procuring Nicol as publisher for Ritson's book.

⁸⁸Park to Percy, Nov. 5, 1803, Nichols, *Lit. Illustr.*, VIII, p. 376.

⁸⁹For Park's version of his connection with *Bibliographia Poetica* see Haslewood, *Op. Cit.*, p. 23 ff.

Bibliographia Poetica was intended as a register of every poetical writer to the end of the sixteenth century. Ritson endeavored to list every poet, whether of renown, as Chaucer and Spenser, or whether known only for a translation in English verse of a Latin poem, or for a single ballad sheet or other promiscuous verse; dramatic pieces were excluded in order not to encroach upon the field occupied by Baker's *Biographia Dramatica*. His avowed concern was with names, titles, and dates. He gave the outstanding facts of an author's life, where such were known, but made no attempt to write biography. Neither did he undertake the rôle of critic, but he frequently called attention to the errors of previous historians of the period and occasionally dropped casual comments on an author or his work. These remarks bear always the stamp of Ritson's individuality and usually reveal keen judgment. His estimate of Lydgate and his voluminous productions is characteristic.

"But, in truth, and fact, these stupid and fatiguing productions which by no means deserve the name of poetry, and their still more stupid and disgusting author, who disgraces the name and patronage of his master Chaucer, are neither worth . . . collecting nor even worthy of preservation." In his "elaborate drawings there are scarcely three lines together of pure and accurate meter."⁴⁰

This condemnation comes at the end of twenty-four pages devoted to Lydgate, in which 251 titles are listed. Ritson is by no means certain that his list is exhaustive or that it does not contain works wrongly attributed, but he is justified in proclaiming it to be "the completest list that can be formed, without access at least, to every manuscript library in the kingdom."⁴¹ His own estimate of his work has been substantiated by time. The Lydgate list contains many works of Chaucer and other contemporaries, and a single work is occasionally multiplied by two, three, or even four, by means of the repetition of varying titles. But, "with all its imperfections on its head", it remains a monument of industry. Necessarily faulty to a degree, it was a marvelous achievement for its day, and while modern scholars have done much toward perfecting the list of Lydgate's works, they have not yet made it definitive.⁴² To the dry and thankless task of chronicling names and titles Ritson brought a breadth of knowledge and a thoroughness of method which made his work as little liable to error as it is possible for that of any pioneer to be.

⁴⁰*Bibliographia Poetica*, p. 88.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, p. 87.

⁴²H. M. MacCracken, *The Lydgate Canon*, London, 1908, corrected Schick's chronology in *Lydgate's Temple of Glass*, London, 1891, but does not consider his own catalogue exhaustive.

Ritson's outburst against the "drivelling" Monk of Bury-St. Edmond is given with his usual exaggeration, but his judgment of Lydgate's poetic ability persists well into the present day.⁴³ Despite the marvelous advance of interest in ancient English poetry, Lydgate was pretty generally neglected during the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century, and Ritson's pronouncement undoubtedly had its influence in perpetuating this neglect. The effect of his words concerning "Piers Plowman" was likewise noticeable.

Up to the publication of *Bibliographia Poetica* "Piers Plowman" had been known in only one form—that now known as the B-text.⁴⁴ In investigating the numerous manuscripts of this poem, Ritson was struck with the degree in which some of them differed from the printed copies. "In order to enable any curious person to distinguish at first sight to which of the two editions (as one may call them) any new manuscripts he may happen to meet with belongs", Ritson quotes the opening lines of the B- and C-texts. The variations, he thinks, may be due to the fact that at some time the author revised his original work, "giving as it were a new edition." Without attempting any statement of priority, he conceives that "it may be possible for a good judge of ancient poetry, possessed of a sufficient stock of critical acumen, to determine which was the first and which was the second."⁴⁵ Manuscripts of "Piers Plowman" were so numerous (there are not less than forty-five extant today) that it is not surprising that even Ritson failed to collate all of them from beginning to end. This probably accounts for his failure to discover that the poem exists in three distinct forms instead of two. He perhaps compared A-text manuscripts only through the opening lines in which they agree closely with B, while the two manuscripts he selected for thorough comparison happened to be a B-text and a C-text.⁴⁶ Although

⁴³Saintsbury remarks, *History of Prosody*, p. 221, note: "Some of Lydgate's recent German editors and champions have been nearly as severe on Ritson himself. There is nothing to be said for his temper or his manners; but the man who knew what he knew a hundred years ago is not to be belittled by those who have profited (or not) by nearly four generations of his and others' labors."

⁴⁴It was first edited by Robert Crowley in 1550, and again by Owen Rogers in 1661.

⁴⁵*Bibliographia Poetica*, p. 29, note.

⁴⁶Ritson mentions nine separate manuscripts, at least two of which are of A-version, and speaks in general of "others". The present highly unsatisfactory state of the text may be gathered from Knott's account of his preparation of a critical text of the A-version from the fourteen imperfect MSS. extant. "An Essay toward the Critical text of the A-version of 'Piers Plowman'," *Modern Philology*, Vol. XII, pp. 129-61.

it was nearly a quarter of a century before the A-text was discovered,⁴⁷ it was Ritson who laid the foundation for the "Piers Plowman" problem.⁴⁸

Ritson entertained no delusion concerning the exhaustiveness of his labors in compiling *Bibliographia Poetica*; his chief ambition was to make a useful catalogue of the early English poets, with the hope that it would be corrected and supplemented by other students. The value of the work has been generally recognized⁴⁹ although some critics have insisted on citing only its inaccuracies and, by ignoring its purpose, censuring it for affording only "dry and uninteresting reading."⁵⁰ Almost immediately upon its publication "corrections" and "additions" began to appear, and Joseph Haslewood undertook a new edition, which was never put to press.⁵¹

At the same time with the preparation of *Bibliographia Poetica*, Ritson was collecting material for a catalogue of Scottish writers upon a similar plan. He called upon Scott⁵² and other friends for assistance in this project and succeeded in preparing the copy for the printer but did not live to publish it. The manuscript, entitled "Bibliographia Scotica; Anecdotes, Biographical and Literary, of Scottish writers, Historians, and Poets from the earliest accounts to the nineteenth century", was a desideratum with Scott,⁵³ and with Chalmers, who intended to publish it.⁵⁴ It was bought over both these men by Longman and Rees and since 1875 has disappeared from sight.⁵⁵

⁴⁷Price, in his edition of Warton's *History*, 1824, discovered the A-text and arranged the versions in their proper order.

⁴⁸For the genesis of this problem see Samuel Moore's "Studies in 'Piers Plowman'," *Mod. Philol.*, Vol. XI, pp. 177-93. Moore states that the "tradition" to which Jusserand appeals in attempting to shift the burden of proof to the shoulders of Manly began with Price; yet it had its partial but definite origin in Ritson's discovery of the C-text.

⁴⁹See *Dibden's Director*, I, pp. 126-8; Brydges, *Restituta*, II, p. 10; "The English Chaucerians", *Cambridge Hist. of Eng. Lit.*

⁵⁰See *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, art. "Lydgate"; Brydges, *Censura Literaria*, I, p. 158.

⁵¹This was no doubt the work announced in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for October, 1814, "to be put to press next year". Many of Haslewood's corrections appeared over his initials in *Censura Lit.*, V, pp. 131-6; VI, pp. 29-34.

⁵²See *Letters*, II, p. 241.

⁵³Scott to Ellis, Oct. 14, 1803, Lockhart's *Scott*, II, p. 136; Park to Hill, Dec. 8, 1803, Add. MSS., 20083, f. 118.

⁵⁴Chalmers to Constable, Oct. 27, and Dec. 27, 1803, *Constable and his Lit. Corresp.*, I, pp. 410-12, 502.

⁵⁵*Notes and Queries*, Ser. 5, Vol. X, pp. 287, 412.

The work for which the printer held up the publication of *Bibliographia Poetica* that they might both appear together⁵⁶ was *Ancient English Metrical Romance's*, in three volumes. Throughout the work, and especially in the prefatory "Dissertation on Romance and Minstrelsy", are to be found numerous vicious slurs upon the accuracy and integrity of Percy, Pinkerton, and Warton, and violent attacks upon Christianity, all of which must be traced to the morbid state of mind induced by Ritson's illness. The copy first submitted for the "Dissertation" contained a number of derogatory allusions to Christianity which were so virulent that Nicol refused to print it without alteration. Accordingly a dozen of the worst passages were deleted or modified before publication.⁵⁷ The melancholy sentence with which the Advertisement concludes affords abundant evidence of Ritson's mental condition.

"Brought to an end with much industry and more attention, in a continued state of ill health and low spirits, the editor abandons it to general censure, with cold indifference, expecting little favor, and less profit; but certain, at any rate, to be insulted by the malignant and calumnious personalities of a base and prostitute gang of lurking assassins, who stab in the dark, and whose poisoned daggers he has already experienced."

There is somewhat more than a tincture of irony in Ritson's professing to take from Percy the suggestion for a compilation on almost every page of which that worthy prelate is branded as a literary forger and an editorial malefactor. This irony is obvious in his appropriating Percy's remarks on the value and importance of a judicious collection of ancient metrical histories and romances, "accurately published, with proper illustrations", as praise of his own collection. To the eloquent commendation of this learned and ingenious writer, he says, nothing need be added in favor of the present publication.

Besides the historical Dissertation, in many ways the most interesting and in some respects the most important part of the work, *Metrical Romances* consists of twelve romances, with "Horn Childe and Maiden Rimnild" added as an Appendix to the second volume. The pieces are printed from the most ancient sources available, a few from black letter copies, more from manuscripts. The work is done with Ritson's customary accuracy; variant readings and editorial emendations are noted with scholarly care. It is not, however, perfect. There are obvious blunders in the text; there are errors of judgment in the critical introductions; and there are mistakes and gaps in the glossary⁵⁸.

⁵⁶Park to Hill, May 26, 1802, Add. Mss., 20083, f. 54.

⁵⁷These cancelled passages were subsequently printed on separate sheets which may be found bound in a very few copies of the first edition. See Appendix B.

⁵⁸Skeat pointed out fifteen "peculiar blunders" but praised the glossary as a noteworthy example of pioneer scholarship. See *N. and Q.*, Ser. 8, Vol. II, p. 3.

But the whole is a remarkably accurate production for its day and reflects credit upon the erudition and scholarship of the editor.

Chestre's beautiful fairy tale, "Launfal", had just previously appeared among Ellis's notes to Way's translation of Le Grand's *Fabliaux*,⁵⁹ and Ritson does not justify his reprinting it here. There are several explanations of troublesome passages given with a "not as mister Ellis says" which would indicate that the romance was given primarily with the peevish purpose of correcting Ellis. A similar reason seems to account for the insertion of "Lybeaus Disconus", which Percy had printed in the *Reliques* as from a copy in his folio manuscript. In the general revision of the *Reliques* for the fourth edition, this romance was made to conform more closely to its original, and the editor's remarks concerning it were altered accordingly. Ritson, who was perhaps more directly responsible than any one else for this general overhauling of the *Reliques*, declared that Percy's treatment of "Lybeaus Disconus" in the fourth edition was such as to destroy confidence in what he had advanced concerning it in the third. Ritson accordingly printed it from the Caligula manuscript for the double purpose of discomfiting Percy and exhibiting a more perfect copy of the romance.

Purely personal considerations play no part in the work with the remaining pieces, which were included on their merits alone. Ritson's conjectures on the sources of these romances were not always as definite as might be wished, but his general theory that they could all be traced to French originals was not far wrong. He did not connect "The Knight of Curtesy and the Fair Lady of Faguell" with the "Chatelain de Coucy", upon which it is founded. He could find no single original for either "Le Bone Florence" or "The Squyre of Lowe Degre", though he considered it more than probable that one had actually existed in the former case and was opposed to the theory of Percy and Warton that "a romance of 'The Squyr of Lowe Degre' is alluded to in the *Rime of Sir Topas*". In contradiction of Percy, who judged "The Geste of Kyng Horn" to be "of genuine English growth", Ritson derives it from a French original. In this estimate he had the support of Tyrwhitt and Warton, and was later followed by Morris and others.⁶⁰ This theory was long questioned, but finally overthrown only in 1876 by Wissman.⁶¹ In the matter of dates Ritson was more nearly correct than previous editors, but many of his conclusions have had to be modified as inves-

⁵⁹Le Grand D'Aussy, *Fabliaux or Tales, abridged from French manuscripts of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries*. Selected and translated by G. L. Way. London, 1800.

⁶⁰See O. Hartenstein, *Studien zur Hornsage*, Heidelberg, 1902.

⁶¹Wissman, *King Horn*, Strassburg, 1876.

tigations in the field brought more information to hand. "Ywayne and Gawain" is to be placed in the first half of the fourteenth century rather than at its close, as Ritson thought.⁶² His vague statement that "The King of Tars" is apparently of the fourteenth century can be made definite for the first third of the century.⁶³ "The Geste of Kyng Horn" he rightly considered to be the oldest Middle English romance which has been preserved.

If Ritson had not already passed beyond the stage at which he cared much what happened to his books when they were published—and his Advertisement indicates that he had passed this stage—the cold reception accorded *Metrical Romances* by the public must have been very disappointing to him.⁶⁴ And his chagrin must have been increased when he recalled that in deference to him George Ellis had not only generously relinquished his own projected edition of ancient romances but had successfully exerted himself in obtaining Nicol as publisher for *Metrical Romances*. This was no easy task, when publishers were reported to "groan in spirit over the peculiarities of Ritson's orthography".⁶⁵ There can be little doubt that Ritson's wide acquaintance with medieval literature, especially in manuscript sources, his unwearying faculty for research, and his advanced editorial standards, gave him superior claim to the work in hand. But it is equally indisputable that he lacked the taste and judgment of Ellis and was certain to produce a book less readily appreciated. Ellis was not, however, permanently denied the field. Upon Ritson's publication falling into almost immediate neglect, and on the solicitation of friends, he took up again his original plan. Early in 1804 Percy asked Thomas Park to undertake a revision of Ritson's work, proffering the use of his own extensive collection of romances. Park declined for two reasons.

"One is that I think Ritson's plan injudicious and his execution of it repulsive: whence his book is likely to prove unsalable. The other is that my highly esteemed and respected friend, Mr. George Ellis, is preparing for publication a general analysis of English metrical romances, intermingled with extracts from the ancient copies, which are curious for the illustration of manners, meter, or language, and which will certainly, prove, like his *Specimens of our lyric poesy*, a very popular book."

⁶²W. H. Schofield, *English Literature from the Norman Conquest to Chaucer*, New York, 1906, p. 230.

⁶³A. Gough, *On the Middle English Metrical Romance of Emare*, Kiel, 1900.

⁶⁴Almost without exception the reviewers devoted themselves to the Dissertation and found little or nothing there to commend. See *British Critic*, September 1804 and January 1805; *Critical Review*, Vol. XXXIX, pp. 179-87; *Edinburgh Review*, Vol. VII, pp. 387-413.

⁶⁵Scott to Ellis, Lockhart's *Scott*, II, p. 87.

Attention was first called to the general subject of romances by Percy in his "Essay on the Ancient Metrical Romances."⁶⁶ Warton's great taste for medieval poetry led him to investigate romances somewhat in detail, but the first comprehensive work upon the subject was that by Ritson. Yet it remained for Ellis's *Specimens of Early English Romances in Metre*, 1805, to arouse a popular interest in the subject which secured for Ritson's collection the attention it deserved.

Ritson intended for publication in the year 1785 a collection of Scottish poetry entitled *The Caledonian Muse*. Like a great many of his books, it was printed in installments, as he had the habit of beginning printing before he had all the copy ready. Although this volume was not ready for publication in 1785, it was nevertheless announced as an issue of that year. Ritson himself referred to this work in his subsequent publications. In the Advertisement to *English Anthology*, 1793, he writes: "The Caledonian Muse, a collection of Scottish poetry, upon a similar plan, printed some years since, though not yet published was, in fact, a subsequent compilation." In a list of books "published by J. Johnson" in *Scottish Songs*, 1794, appears this notice: "The Caledonian Muse, a chronological selection of Scottish poetry, from the earliest times to the present: with notes and a glossary; and elegant vignettes, engraved by Heath, from the designs of Stothard. To which is added, an essay on the author of Christ's Kirk on the Green." The work itself had not yet appeared, and on March 5, 1794, Ritson wrote to Paton:

"The impression of another little volume, of which I believe I shewed you a fragment, entitled 'The Caledonian Muse', which had engaged my attention for a great many years, and was at last got ready for publication, has been lately destroyed by fire in the printer's house; so that I neither possess, nor can procure, one single complete copy. 'Sic transit Gloria mundi.' I am of course meditating a trip to Scotland, to re-collect materials for a new edition."⁶⁷

Ritson's belief that the whole impression was at that time destroyed has been found to be erroneous although it was sufficiently strong in his own mind to cause him to abandon hope of finishing the volume on the original plan. From an incomplete manuscript of "Select Scottish Poems"⁶⁸ and some fugitive notes by David Laing,⁶⁹ into whose hands

⁶⁶Nichols, *Lit. Illust.*, VIII, p. 377.

⁶⁷*Letters*, II, p. 45; Nichols, *Lit. Illust.*, III, p. 778.

⁶⁸Now in Mr. Perry's library. This MS. was put into the hands of Constable for publication but at the time of Ritson's death only two sheets were in print and it was never completed. See *Constable and his Literary Correspondence*, I, pp. 497-500.

⁶⁹Picked up in a copy of the *Caledonian Muse* in an Edinburgh book shop.

the information concerning it came, it appears that Ritson had actually made some progress in republishing his material under the new title. He seems to have recompared the text of the different pieces with the oldest manuscripts or the earliest or best editions, to have struck out passages or resolved to omit altogether some of the longer poems which the *Caledonian Muse* contained, and to have added some ancient pieces with which at first he may have been unacquainted. He proceeded in this work until death put an end to his labors, and he never knew that upwards of four hundred copies of such pages of the *Caledonian Muse* as had been printed and probably removed to the publisher's warehouse escaped the fire. In reality only the introductory portion of the work was destroyed. The copies that were saved remained untouched in Johnson's shop until his death in December, 1809, after which they were purchased by Robert Triphook.⁷⁰ The only authentic account of the later history of the volume is given in the following letter of Triphook, which unfortunately bears neither address nor date:⁷¹

Dear Sir

Till this moment I have had no leisure to attend particularly to the Ritson's *Caledonian Muse*. I send you with this a copy complete so far as I have it. Sheet 2. was printed by me in continuation. & the copy for the remainder of the vol. with rather a long Life of Ritson to be prefixed, was sent to Mr. Heber for his perusal some six years ago, but by some unfortunate accident it was either lost or mislaid, and it has remained in the state I now send it ever since.⁷² It appears that Ritson (by your letter) had printed to Sheet 2. (these additional sheets were probably destroyed as Waste by Johnson of St. Pauls Churchyard, before I purchased—Of his select Scottish Poems. Hunter who succeeded Johnson, knows nothing—nor have I ever seen a Copy.

The Number of the *Caledonian Muse* is about 420 a few more or less. I have also a Portrait (Shade) of Ritson engraved by me for the purpose of placing with the volume, of which no impressions have yet been taken. I will dispose of the whole to you at two shillings a book & five guineas the copper. Mr. Haslewood (who collected the material for the Life) has a portion of MS. ready transcribed for the press in order to finish the work.⁷³

⁷⁰In a note in his edition of Ritson's *English Songs*, p. xciv, Thomas Park says: "Mr. Triphook, jun. bookseller in St. James St. has purchased that portion of *Caledonian Muse* which escaped conflagration, and purposes to complete and publish it, according to the original plan."

⁷¹This letter is in David Laing's copy of *The Caledonian Muse*, now in Mr. Perry's library.

⁷²Since Triphook did not acquire the *Caledonian Muse* before 1810, this statement would place the composition of the letter in 1816 or after.

⁷³In Brydges's *British Bibliographer*, Vol. IV, p. 302, appears the following notice signed with the initials "J. H.", evidently Joseph Haslewood: "It is my intention to attempt a conclusion of the last part of Ritson's *Caledonian Muse*, and

Of the volume on Scotland at Brand's Sale. I cannot trace to whom I sold it. The Maunsell's catalogue was sold for cash. If a copy of Chaucer 1532 occurs I will secure it for you

I have purchased of Mr. Chalmers his Edition of Churchyard Chips concerning Scotland—150 copies, which I will sell *en Masse* for 30*l*. I think it would be acceptable in Scotland

May I beg you to forward the enclosed small Packets as directed

I remain

Your obd. Serv.

Robt. Triphook

Old Bond St.

Oct. 12.

Triphook did not succeed in disposing of the work and in 1821 published it himself, with the following title page: *The Caledonian Muse: a chronological collection of Scottish poetry from the earliest times. Edited by the late Joseph Ritson, Esq. With vignettes engraved by Heath, after the designs of Stothard. London: Printed 1785: and now first published, by Robert Triphook, 23 Old Bond Street, 1821.* The "Life" and the proposed additions by Haslewood⁷⁴ do not appear, and the publisher states that the only additions to Ritson's material have been a Title and a Portrait.

The *Caledonian Muse* consists of a chronological arrangement of Scottish poetry (songs excluded) in three divisions, comprising respectively: Authentic Poems, Poems by uncertain authors, and Extracts. There are but a few notes and these appear in the first pages of the book. It is to be regretted that Ritson's "Essay on the author of Christ's Kirk on the Green" was destroyed. He contended that the poem was erroneously ascribed to James I.⁷⁵ and in this volume attributes it to James V., but his reasons are nowhere to be found.

By the middle of 1803 Ritson had ready for publication an historical volume on King Arthur which he submitted to Longman and Rees for publication. It was rejected for reasons which Ritson himself anticipated in a letter to Scott:

"I have put into Mr. Longman's hand at his own request, for the opinion of some critic he is used to consult, my "Life of King Arthur" but whether the partners to whom I was recommended by our worthy friend Dr. Leyden, will submit the volume within a very short period, to the candor of the sons of Caledonia, rather than suffer any relic of the accurate Ritson to be lost." If the material which Haslewood prepared "within a very short period" is that to which Triphook refers, 1816 would be a highly probable date for his letter.

⁷⁴Haslewood probably used the biographical materials he had collected for this volume in his own *Life and Publications of Ritson*, 1824.

⁷⁵*Scottish Songs*, I, p. xxxvi, note.

undertake the publication, I much doubt, as Mr. Longman thinks my orthography unfavorable to its sale and Mr. Rees was apprehensive I should treat the Welshmen with too much familiarity, an apprehension, I confess, which will turn out to be well founded."⁷⁶

Ritson had no further opportunity to seek a publisher, and the volume did not appear until 1825, with the title, *The Life of King Arthur: from ancient historians and authentic documents*. Joseph Frank, Ritson's nephew, supervised the printing but did no editing save to eliminate the objectionable orthography. He made no attempt at criticism and offered only a single comment on the work:

"The difficulty of the subject may be partly estimated from doubt having been actually entertained by the author, during his early researches, as to the identity of his hero, and fears lest the real Arthur might not, after all, be found:

'So many of his shadows had he met,
And not the very king.'

In the Preface Ritson concerned himself mainly with demonstrating that Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Britonum* is "a series of palpable and monstrous lies", and that the Britons or Welsh, by professing to believe it authentic have shown themselves to have "more vanity and less judgment than any other people in the world." He ignored altogether the literary importance of Geoffrey's work and seemed to feel that because the *Historia* was a forgery its author deserved nothing but condemnation and abuse. From the absence of any mention of Arthur by historians prior to the twelfth century, Ritson concluded that Geoffrey had invented the whole of his pseudo-history. He admitted that the Bishop may have had the Latin Nennius before him but flatly denied the existence of the Welsh originals. Beyond Nennius and the romance of Charlemagne, he contended that Geoffrey had nothing to draw upon but his own fertile imagination. For support of his charge of infidelity Ritson turned to Geoffrey's contemporaries. He quotes at length from the Preface to William of Newburgh's chonicle,⁷⁷ which he considers "not only a criticism of extraordinary merit, for the time, but even the only thing of the kind to be found in ancient English literature." The tone of this Preface is as intemperate as Ritson's own:—"How petulantly and how impudently he [Geoffrey] lies." The testimony of Giraldus Cambrensis,⁷⁸ "himself a Welshman and a bishop", who calls the British History a "lying book", is considered by Ritson sufficient to clinch his argument against Geoffrey. It is obvious that Ritson took

⁷⁶Letters, II, p. 238.

⁷⁷*Historia Rerum Anglicarum*, c. 1200, ed. by T. Hearne, Oxford, 1719.

⁷⁸*Descriptio Cambriae*, ed. Powell, London, 1585.

keen delight in his arraignment of Geoffrey. If he recognized the tremendous influence of *Historia Britonum* upon subsequent literature, he studiously avoided any mention of it and seemed obsessed with the idea that fraud or deception on the part of an author destroyed the value of everything he wrote. Such an obsession is, perhaps, a not unnatural product of twenty years' activity in hunting down literary impostors.

In the "Life" of King Arthur proper, Ritson is less the controversialist and more the historical compiler. By implication he is all along rectifying the erroneous statements of Geoffrey, but, with a few exceptions, he avoids comparisons. He has collected a mass of interesting quotations from what he considered authentic historians—Caesar, Tacitus, Leland, Nennius, carefully distinguishing the scholia of Samuel, etc.—and arranged them in chronological order. It was his purpose to present a history of Britain, particularly through the reign of Arthur, and carefully to sift out the authentic facts from the mass of tradition and legend which had accumulated about his hero. In the labor of gathering from remote and obscure sources material on a definite subject, Ritson was unequalled by any one in his day.⁷⁹ But he had not the ability to weave his extracts into an interesting and continuous narrative, and he seldom ventured to deduce inferences or draw conclusions. As a result of his merits he has left in this volume a mass of valuable material; but because of his defects it remains only a "mass" fit for reference by the student of a particular subject but of no general interest.

Ritson's interest in Scotland, as revealed by the publication of several volumes of songs and poems, has already been noted. When his prefatory essays in *Scotish Songs* engaged him in dispute with Pinkerton, he began a careful investigation of the history of the early inhabitants of the British Isles, and especially of Scotland. On August 22, 1795 he informed Harrison that he was employing himself "very busily in researches after the Celts, the Picts, and the Scots", adding by way of explanation, "I am quite sick of the modern writers of ancient history, who think to make amends by their fine language for their total want of industry, truth, and candor."⁸⁰ The results of this investigation were ultimately published in three volumes under two different titles. The *Annals of the Caledonians, Picts, and Scots; and of Strathclyde, Cumberland, Galloway, and Murray*, in two volumes, was ready for the press by the end of 1801 at which time he wrote to Constable concerning it:

"My annals of the Picts, Scots, Strathclyde Britons, Cumbrians, Galwegians,

⁷⁹Cf. his *Robin Hood*.

⁸⁰*Letters*, II, p. 99.

and men of Murray, in Latin and English, with which I have taken great pains, and which is certainly a very curious book for that sort of learning, is now ready for the press. If you think it would answer for your shop, it is at your service: but I do not wish you to venture upon it, if you are not perfectly satisfied, though we should likewise have the name of a good bookseller in London. Think on this and tell me your mind."⁸¹

Although Constable did not accept the work at this time, it was through his interest that it was sent to Ballantyne, by whom it was printed a quarter of a century later.⁸² The other volume, *Memoirs of the Celts or Gauls*, Ritson made no effort to publish. He had it practically ready for the press but in the last of his extant letters referred to it as "laid by for the present."⁸³ These two histories were edited by Frank in 1827 and 1828. He professes to have altered the original manuscripts no whit, save to reduce Ritson's "peculiar orthography to the standard of our language" and to "omit a few hasty epithets, appearing to be harsher than the occasion could require or justify, (which the author, had he lived to publish the works himself, would, probably, have altered)"—a conjecture which the violence of Ritson's latest denunciations seems not to support.

This whole historical investigation was undertaken with the purpose of discrediting Pinkerton's theory of the origin of the Scots, and so these volumes will be looked into more minutely in the next chapter. It will suffice here to see their general nature.

In *Memoirs of the Celts* Ritson brought together all the allusions to the Celts which he was able to gather from poets and historians of the Middle Ages. These extracts he arranged in twenty-one chapters and ten appendices, treating of almost every detail of the customs, habits, and personal characteristics of the people, as well as of their origin and their language. In the *Annals of the Caledonians* it was his object to present

"a chronological account of the inhabitants of the country known, for the first time, by the name of Caledonia, and, in successive ages, by those of Albany, Pictland, Scotland, and North Britain, from the earliest period which history affords, and from the most ancient and authentic documents which time has preserved, and with that attention to truth and accuracy which integrity and utility require."

⁸¹Constable and his *Literary Correspondents*, I, p. 498.

⁸²Constable wrote Scott, Sept. 20, 1825: "I am glad to say I have had it in my power to send Ballantyne two or three jobs within the last week—one of them the History of the Picts, by our old friend Ritson."

⁸³*Letters*, II, p. 248.

His sources, as in the former work, were ancient historians and poets—especially the Latin chroniclers. His method is to follow a general historical introduction to each nation or people by all the passages concerning it which he was able to garner. It is distinctly to his credit that, though he held a brief for the Celts, and though he was concerned with establishing his theory in opposition to that supported by Pinkerton, yet he did not stoop to the methods of the professional dialectician by presenting only his own side of the case but fearlessly gave every reference found, irrespective of its bearing on his thesis. Such a method manifestly disarms criticism and inspires confidence.

The last of Ritson's publications appeared in 1831 as *Fairy Tales, now first collected: to which are prefixed two dissertations: 1. On Pygmies; 2. On Fairies*. There is no mention of this work anywhere in his extant correspondence, but it seems probable that the twenty-nine fairy tales, in both prose and verse, and the six fairy songs, which compose the body of the volume, were brought together in the 1780's when he was concerned with collecting and publishing the poetic *Garlands*. Yet from internal evidence it appears that the prefatory Essays could not have been composed earlier than 1794. He probably took up this volume and completed its preparation for the press sometime during his later years when illness made continued work on one subject a burden.

In the first edition of the *Reliques* Percy had printed with an old ballad of "Robin Good Fellow" two woodcuts which he said "seem to represent the dresses in which this whimsical character was formerly exhibited upon the stage." In *Scotish Songs* Ritson produced evidence purporting to prove that these cuts were originally used to represent two of the characters in Bulwer's *Artificial Changeling* and had nothing to do with Robin Good Fellow. Because Percy altered his remarks in the fourth edition of the *Reliques* but did not pay homage to Ritson for his correction, the critic finds occasion in the present Essay to ridicule the "contemptible tone of the pertinacious prelate." However little these contemptuous comments may illuminate the subject of Fairies, they serve to reveal the nature of their author, and to suggest very strongly a late date of composition.

Aside from this blemish and another produced by Ritson's ungracious reference in indecent language to his early controversy with Steevens on the mortality of Fairies, the Essay is delightful reading. It seems evident that Ritson sought to adapt his material to youthful readers, but he could not avoid learned and obscure quotations with their accompanying footnotes. By means of citations from writers of various countries and different ages, he demonstrated the universality of the belief in other-world creatures. He then turned to Oberon, Puck, Robin Good

Fellow, and Titania, whose dress, appearance, and habits are illustrated by happy extracts from Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, and lesser English poets. The Essay concludes with a touch of personal reminiscence which is extremely rare in Ritson's writings:

"The compiler of the present sheets remembers when very young, to have heard a respectable old woman, then a midwife, at Stockton, relate that, when, in her youthful days, she was a servant at Durham, being up late one Saturday night, cleaning the irons in the kitchen, she heard these *shrikes* (of the Barguest), first at a great, and then at a less distance, till, at length, the loudest, and most horrible, that can be conceived, just at the kitchen-window, sent her upstairs, she did not know how, where she fell into the arms of a fellow-servant, who could scarcely prevent her from fainting away."⁸⁴

In concluding the chronology of Ritson's editorial labors it will be well to summarize his work and estimate its importance. In a period of twenty years—only thirteen of which were actively employed in publishing—he saw through the press thirty-six volumes and prepared nearly as many more for publication. Of these, ten were printed after his death; the others either were destroyed or remain unknown in manuscript. The printed volumes consist of collections of poems, songs, ballads, and romances; legal antiquities; critical comments; and historical extracts. The material of but few of these volumes is original. Ritson is their editor not their author; and it was as an editor that he exerted most influence upon his age. His editorial creed may be summed up in one word—honesty. To be more explicit, he insisted on recourse to the most ancient sources, on fidelity to originals in transcribing, on a candid notation of all necessary variations and additions, on a free acknowledgment of obligations, and on exact references to all quotations. These principles he followed in his own publications, and he insisted with a great deal of vehemence that other editors should adhere to them and unsparingly condemned those who went contrary to his precepts. Tyrwhitt had anticipated Ritson by nearly a decade in giving to England an example of scholarly editing; but, while his work attracted the favorable comments of nearly all critics, it did not operate as a reformatory force. It remained for Ritson, with his eccentricities, his abusive manner, his violent language, and his reiterative insistence on honesty, to stimulate the attention of students of early literature to such a degree that editorial laxity was generally discountenanced. It was because of Ritson's activity that Percy purged the fourth edition of the *Reliques* of much dross and that Pinkerton confessed his dishonesty and plead for forgiveness. Ireland and Scott admittedly stood in awe of his critical

⁸⁴*Fairy Tales*, p. 58.

eye, and Ellis and Weber confessed themselves indebted to him for examples of faithful editing.⁸⁵

In the field of popular poetry Ritson's influence was likewise considerable. The mere bulk of his poetical material outweighs that of any other man of his day. Half the total number of his volumes were collections of poems, songs, ballads, and romances, both English and Scottish. Although he confessed his failure to gather ballads from oral tradition, yet he rescued from possible destruction many a relique of antiquity by making accessible unknown or forgotten manuscripts and black letter copies. Not only did he increase the interest in popular poetry first aroused by Percy, but he inspired a veneration for the "rude" remains of the past which was absent in the days of Percy and came to be thoroughly acknowledged only in those of Scott and Laing.

⁸⁵This was a preliminary, though a necessary, step to present-day "critical" editing. For a concise statement of the evolution of editing from the exact reproduction of a single MS. through the "eclectic" method to the "critical", see E. P. Hammond, *Chaucer: A Bibliographical Manual*, New York, 1908, pp. 106-13.

CHAPTER VII

PREFATORY DISSERTATIONS

Classification of the material—General Characteristics of the Essays—First division: Songs and musical instruments—Historical view—Among the English—In Scotland—Second division: Minstrels, ballads, and romances—Percy's minstrel theory—Ritson's refutation—Definition of terms—Percy's alterations in fourth edition of *Reliques*—Social status of the minstrels—Their literary status—Ballad origins—Oral transmission—Comments on the folio manuscript—Exposure of Percy's editorial methods—Third division: Scottish poetry and history—Attack upon Pinkerton's integrity—Antipathy toward Scotchmen—Attack upon Scottish national character—Pinkerton's "Gothic system"—Ritson's defense of the Celts—Summary.

All of Ritson's publications have now been passed in review, and it remains to consider the historical essays prefixed to four of the collections. These are five in number: 1. "A Historical Essay on the Origin and Progress of National Song", in *English Songs*, 1783; 2. "Observations on the Ancient English Minstrels", and 3. "Dissertation on the Songs, Music, and Vocal and Instrumental Performances of the Ancient English", in *Ancient Songs*, 1790; 4. "A Historical Essay on Scottish Song", in *Scottish Songs*, 1794; and 5. "Dissertation on Romance and Minstrelsy", in *Metrical Romances*, 1802. To these will be added, for reasons presently apparent, two historical volumes: *Memoirs of the Celts*, 1827, and *Annals of the Caledonians*, 1828. Ritson made no formal classification of his material except within each of the essays, yet the substance of all of them falls naturally into three divisions: songs and the musical instruments that accompanied singing; minstrels, ballads, and romances; Scottish poetry and history. In handling the last type of material he came into violent opposition to Pinkerton and his assumptions, and much of his investigation was undertaken with the avowed purpose of controverting his Scottish opponent. A situation almost parallel to this obtains in the second division. What he had to say about minstrels and romances was largely inspired by the desire to expose the fallacy of Bishop Percy's hypotheses. Only in dealing with the history of song and musical instruments is he free from personal controversy with an individual and his theories.

Although the titles are various, these essays are all built upon one plan. Just as in forming his collections of poetry and song Ritson was the editor and not the poet, so in producing the essays he was the com-

piller and not the historian. In his own view, however, he was writing history, for he considered it the business of the historian simply to give his material as he found it without attempting to put himself into it, much less to construct a philosophy. It was in the strength of this belief that he refused in most instances to draw inferences from his material and failed always to summarize conclusions. What he did do was this. Given a subject, say English or Scottish song, he gathered from remote poetical and historical sources an astonishing number of references and allusions to it and then strung them together in chronological sequence with a minimum of editorial comment. It was his declared purpose "to discover fact, not to indulge conjecture", and it was matter of pride to him that he made no statement without citing for it an old authority, either printed or manuscript.

Such was the plan adopted in all the essays. It was worked out more exhaustively for songs than for any other subject. The "Historical Essay on the Origin and Progress of National Song" gave a survey of the subject from the very earliest times to Ritson's day. Ostensibly dealing with English song, it follows the development of the type through Greek, Roman, Italian, Spanish, and French. This employment of the comparative method was a little surprising in Ritson in view of his slightly earlier condemnation of Warton for using it in his *History*. But it is introduced awkwardly and not very effectively. What Ritson really does is to give the development of national song in each country separately. Except in the treatment of France he makes no effort to illustrate the progress of national song in England by its growth among other peoples. The essay is a learned compilation and was the product of unwearied research. The extensive quotations from Greek and Latin sources amply demonstrate Ritson's familiarity with the ancient tongues, unless, mayhap, he used translations and had the help of friends in this part of the work. It has been asserted by Haslewood¹ and denied by Nicolas² that he was materially assisted in the classical portion by his friend John Baynes. There seems no room for doubt on the question as he himself states³ that he is indebted to Baynes for the translation of all original Greek poetry in the essay.

Ritson pursued the subject of English song still further and seven years later published the "Dissertation on the Songs, Music, and Vocal and Instrumental Performances of the Ancient English." That part

¹Op. Cit., p. 9, note.

²Op. Cit., p. xxxiv, note.

³Ritson's MS. note to *Eng. Songs*, p. ix. All page references to the essays will be given under the titles of the books in which they appear, not under the subject of the essays.

of the Dissertation dealing with the songs is an excellent supplement to the earlier essay. He begins the subject with the Norman Conquest and gives it detailed treatment such as the length of his former essay and the attention paid to foreign tongues made impossible there. In treating of the music and the musical instruments he makes extensive use of the histories of Burney⁴ and Hawkins⁵ and supplements these with numerous illustrations from the literature of the period. Together these two essays present a great mass of material on the subject—undigested, but valuable merely in the fact of its being brought together.

With the essays on English Song must be noted briefly the "Historical Essay on Scottish Song", which does in the same way for the songs and music of the northern kingdom what the two previous essays do for England. It falls into three divisions treating respectively of the songs, the music, and the musical instruments. In this it exactly parallels the earlier dissertations and affords a further illustration of the duplication of Ritson's English interests in Scottish affairs.

With the exception of the "Dissertation on the Songs, Music, etc.", the essays thus far considered play a minor part in the two remaining divisions: that on Scottish Song in connection with Pinkerton and the whole Scottish question, that on English Song with the discussion of Percy and the minstrels.

The earliest formal treatise on the ancient English minstrels was Percy's "Essay", published in the original edition of the *Reliques*, 1765, and reprinted without material alteration in the second and third editions, 1767 and 1775. Percy defined the minstrels to be "an order of men in the Middle Ages, who united the arts of poetry and music, and sung verses to the harp of their own composing." By means of a wealth of quotations from English and continental sources he pictured the minstrels as a society of men in high repute, having free access to the homes of the nobility and the great and to the courts of kings. He represented them as musicians, as singers, and as poets; often as all three in one. The Anglo-Saxon minstrel he gave an exalted character, almost equal to that of the Scandinavian Skald; and for ages after the Conquest the English minstrels were, he declared, persons of honor and renown.

Percy's minstrel theory was first challenged by Ritson in his "Essay on National Song", wherein he flatly contradicted almost every claim to honor which the Bishop had made for the minstrels. Only a few

⁴Charles Burney, *A General History of Music, from the earliest ages to the present period*. London, 1776.

⁵Sir John Hawkins, *The General History of the Science and Practise of Music*. London, 1776.

historical references were adduced in this essay, but Ritson again took up the subject and treated it at some length in the "Observations on the Ancient English Minstrels". He there set himself to answer the question: "Whether at any time, since the Norman Conquest, there has existed a distinct order of Englishmen, who united the arts of poetry and music, and got their livelihood by singing to the harp verses in their native tongue of their own composing." He ignored the Anglo-Saxon period because he considered it impossible to obtain reliable data concerning it. His aversion to Geoffrey of Monmouth,⁶ whom Percy had frequently cited in the early part of his essay, led him to declare that even the mere existence of minstrels in England prior to the eleventh century was wholly conjectural. Nevertheless, the allusions which Percy gathered from Tacitus, Bede, and the Saxon Chronicle, as well as from Geoffrey, create a strong impression in favor of his theory. Little has since been added to our stock of information concerning the Anglo-Saxon minstrel—perhaps nothing with historical authentication; and Percy's theory remains as a highly probable conjecture.⁷

In taking up the subject at the time of the Conquest, Ritson's first step was the very essential one of distinguishing the various terms which Percy had taken over from the French and indiscriminately massed together under the name minstrel. "Under this term", says the critic, "we are to include the *trouvère* or poet, the *chanteur* or vocal performer, and the *ménétrier* or musician: not to mention the *fablier*, *conteur*, *jongleur*, *baladin*, etc. all of which were sometimes distinct professions and sometimes united in one and the same man."⁸ Although Guiraut de Riquier,⁹ five centuries before Ritson, had protested against the confusion arising from the indiscriminate grouping of the various classes of entertainers, Percy persistently refused to differentiate them. He declared that "it equally throws light upon the general history of the profession to show what favor or encouragement was given, at any particular period of time, to any one branch of it."¹⁰

Acting on the distinction which he had made, Ritson first of all separated the English from the French and Norman minstrels. It was

⁶Expressed in uncompromising terms in the *Life of King Arthur*. See above, Chapter VI.

⁷The best treatment of the English Minstrels is that given by Chambers in the first four chapters of *The Medieval Stage*, Oxford, 1903. Other English books on the subject are unsatisfactory. An excellent bibliography of French and German works is given by Chambers.

⁸*Ancient Songs and Ballads*, 2nd edition, I, p. ii, note. See also *Metrical Romances*, 2nd edition, I, p. 79.

⁹See Chambers, *Op. Cit.*, I, p. 63.

¹⁰*Reliques*, 4th edition, I, p. 50.

the latter, he maintained, whom Percy had described as a respectable society with free entrance to the homes of the nobility. The English minstrels, he declared, were not a respectable society, if a society at all. They were only rude singers to the vulgar and illiterate and had no opportunity to appear at Court or in the houses of the nobility, because there only French was spoken and English despised.

From the absence of reference by historians or by the English minstrels to themselves as composers, Ritson concluded that they, unlike the French minstrels who constantly refer to themselves in their songs, did not compose but only sang and played. "They could sing and play; but it was none of their business to read and write."¹¹ Ritson's evidence is probable, not conclusive. In rebuttal Percy maintained, with much plausibility, that "by proving that minstrels were singers of the old romantic songs, gests, etc., we have in effect proved them to have been the makers of at least some of them."¹² But Ritson carried his restrictions a step further and limited the function of the minstrels to playing on musical instruments,—a conjecture that is open to grave doubt. From the medieval glossarists, from the early chroniclers, from "Piers Plowman", and from the Mysteries, he extracted passages in which "minstrel" was used interchangeably with "fiddler". But the critic himself does not seem to be wholly assured on this point, for he elsewhere admits that the minstrels went up and down the country singing ballads and rude songs to the accompaniment of their musical instruments. He is, however, assured of the utter degradation of the English minstrels and of their rapid decline in the eyes of the law. The extinction of minstrelsy, if not of the minstrels, came in the age of Elizabeth as a result of religious restrictions and of legal enactments made necessary by the large number of men who continually sought refuge for vagabondage under the guise of minstrels. At a fitting postlude to his account of their services, Ritson quotes the following satire by Dr. Bull:

"When Jesus went to Jairus' house,
Whose daughter was about to dye,
He turn'd the minstrel out of doors,
Among the rascal company:
Beggars they are with one consent,
And Rogues, by act of parliament."¹³

In the fourth edition of the *Reliques* Percy revised his essay to a considerable extent and profited by Ritson's criticisms. Although he

¹¹*English Songs*, I, p. lxviii.

¹²*Reliques*, I, p. 60.

¹³*Ancient Songs*, I, p. xvi, note.

nowhere mentions his opponent by name, he expressly states that "in consequence of objections respecting the English minstrels after the Conquest [the latter] part [of the essay] hath been much enlarged, and additional light thrown upon the subject: which, to prevent cavil, hath been extended to minstrelsy in all its branches, as it was established in England, whether by natives or foreigners."¹⁴ Finding it impossible to distinguish between English and French minstrels (as Ritson had demanded) and still maintain his thesis throughout, Percy altered the title of the essay to read: "The ancient minstrels in England."¹⁵ Declaring that he had "readily corrected any mistakes which have been proved to be in this Essay" because he was "wedded to no hypothesis", he also changed his definition of minstrels to comply with Ritson's criticism. It now read: "an order of men in the Middle Ages, who subsisted by the arts of poetry and music, and sang to the harp verses composed by themselves, or others." But, while the Bishop conceded a good deal to Ritson by admitting that the English minstrels were, perhaps, properly speaking, "subordinate members of the college", and by qualifying many of his remarks on their exalted station, yet he persisted in considering them poets as well as musicians and continued the uncritical method of employing semi-synonymous terms without discriminating among them. Ritson examined Percy's revised essay carefully and made reply to it in the "Dissertation on Romance and Minstrelsy". There he exulted with unseemly delight over the alterations which the Bishop had made as a result of his criticisms¹⁶ and filled his pages with additional proofs of the points already advanced.

It is now apparent that the issue between Percy and Ritson was a dual one: what was the social status of the English minstrels—were they honored and respected, or were they rogues and vagabonds? What was their literary status—were they merely musicians and singers, or were they composers as well? Percy answered both questions by giving to the minstrels the most elevated rank in both literary and social spheres; Ritson, by giving them the lowest. The crux of the whole disagreement lay in the refusal of both men to recognize the coeval existence of two grades or classes of minstrels. The distinction once clearly made between the English and Normal minstrels, Ritson was correct in consid-

¹⁴*Reliques*, 4th ed., p. 64.

¹⁵This is significant because it shows that Percy conceded to Ritson practically half the point at issue.

¹⁶Wheatley ignores this last Essay and labors under the impression that the "Essay on the ancient English minstrels", 1790, was Ritson's reply to Percy's revisions in the 4th edition of the *Reliques*, 1794. See *Reliques*, ed. H. B. Wheatley, 1876, I, p. 430.

ering the former as an inferior society. There can be little, if any, doubt that the Anglo-Saxon types were submerged by the Norman minstrels and in the centuries immediately following the Conquest were in disrepute and that they had access to the homes of the nobility or the court only when in the company of French minstrels.¹⁷ But if this distinction is not made—if the subject for discussion is the “Ancient minstrels in England” and not the “Ancient English minstrels”¹⁸—it is legitimate to consider a class of men of high rank and renown. The difficulty lay in not realizing that this twofold classification runs through the whole history of minstrelsy. The merging of the *mimus* and *scop* of Roman and Teutonic tradition was never quite complete, but a new distinction based largely on the old difference came to be well established in England by the second quarter of the fourteenth century.¹⁹ Both Percy and Ritson were treating of the same period of time²⁰ but of different classes of men in it. As a result, each of the disputants had hold of only a bare half of the truth, yet each succeeded in illustrating his half with historical, legal, and poetical references such as would not, perhaps, otherwise have been brought together for years. It was not a barren logomachy in which they were engaged. Modern writers on the subject confess that there is little fact to be added to the stock accumulated by these pioneers, but that it only remains for them to place the two halves side by side and make the necessary adjustments in order to come at the whole truth.

On the second point—the literary status of the minstrels—there was scarcely less divergence of opinion. Percy considered them composers as well as singers. While it was generally recognized that the English minstrels translated and adapted many of the romances brought over by the French, he held that in some cases the tables were turned and the French made versions of native English minstrel songs. “Rich-

¹⁷A roll of payments made on the occasion of a Whitsuntide feast held in London in 1306 records many minstrels by name. The list is headed by five minstrels with the title “le roy”; next come a number said to be in the employ of this or that reverend or noble guest at the feast. These have French names. Lastly comes a large number of inferior minstrels, “les autre menestres de la commune”, and some of these seem to have been of English birth. Chambers, *Op. Cit.*, I, p. 47.

¹⁸The difference in the title of his Essay made by Percy in the first and fourth editions.

¹⁹Chambers, *Op. Cit.*, vol. I, Bk. 1, “Minstrelsy”.

²⁰DeQuincey, “Homer and the Homeridae”, in *Works*, ed. Masson, 1896, vol. VI, p. 23, says of the point at issue between Percy and Ritson: “The contradiction lay in the *time*: Percy and Ritson were speaking of different periods; the Bishop of the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries—the attorney of the sixteenth and seventeenth”. But this is a misconception of the facts.

ard Cour de Lion'' and ''Eger and Grime'', from the use of native names he considered of genuine English growth, and this view is held by the editors of the folio manuscript.²¹ Ritson, on the contrary, did not believe the minstrels sufficient to account for minstrelsy. Granting to them neither education nor culture, it was absurd to think of the minstrels as the authors of fabulous narratives several thousand lines in length. Though they could neither read nor write, yet they could sing what men of genius had composed or translated for them. Ritson does not state who he thinks these ''men of genius'' were, but he says there is nothing about the romances themselves to preclude the view that they were written by ''a monk in his cell'' or ''a priest in his closet''.²² While denying Percy's thesis that the English minstrels composed romances, he did not contend that there were none of native English growth. ''Eglamour''²³, ''Trimour''²⁴, ''The squyre of lowe degre'', and it may be one or two more, of which no French originals are known, may be fairly concluded to be of English invention; but, he says, ''it is absolutely impossible that this can be the case with 'Guy', 'Bevis', or the rest, of which these originals are extant.'''²⁵ With scant justice Ritson doubted the probability that these famous romances, the French manuscripts of which are superior to the English and antedate them by one, two, or even three centuries, had been originally composed on English soil though in the French language. Indeed, he carried his iconoclasm so far as to deny the theories of the Arabian, Scandinavian, and Provençal origin of romance, without substituting any definite system in their stead. All of these he rejected because they were largely conjectural, there being not sufficient fact to support a theory. But his own proposal was equally conjectural. ''After all'', he said, ''it seems highly probable that the origin of romance in every age or country is to be sought in the different systems of superstition which have from time to time prevailed, whether pagan or Christian.''²⁶ While this theory contains a large element of truth, Ritson pushed it too far in denying historical basis to the romances. Their heroes are not historical characters, he declared: ''they are mere creatures of the imagi-

²¹J. W. Hales and F. J. Furnivall, *Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript*, London, 1867-8, Vol. I, p. 341 ff.

²²*Metrical Romances*, I, p. 57.

²³''There is a secret history attached to the source of this romance yet to be unravelled''—Halliwell, ed. ''Sir Eglamour of Artois'', for Camden Society, 1844.

²⁴Nothing of the source of this romance is given by Hales and Furnivall, nor by Halliwell who edited it for the Percy Society, 1846.

²⁵*Metrical Romances*, I, p. 51.

²⁶*Ibid.*, I, p. 19.

nation and only obtain an establishment in history because it was usually written upon the authority of romance."²⁷

Ritson's disrespect for the English minstrels was thoroughgoing. Not only did he rate them as rogues and vagabonds, deny them the ability to read and write, and limit their activities to "twanging on the harp", but he characterized their songs as rude and barbarous. Sidney's "blind crowder with no rougher voice than rude style",²⁸ was the typical minstrel for Ritson, and his music was happily described by Puttenham: "your ordinary rimers use very much their measures in the odd, as nine and eleven, and the sharp accent upon the last syllable, which therefore makes him go ill-favoredly and like a minstrel's music."²⁹ With the coming into favor of the ballad singer in the age of Elizabeth, Ritson noticed a corresponding decrease in the entertainment furnished by the minstrels. These were undoubtedly contemporaneous events, but a causal connection would be more difficult to establish than Ritson seems to think. It is his opinion that the ballad singers with their simple melodies soon drew all attention from the wild and licentious meter of the minstrels and caused them in sheer self-defense to adopt ballad tunes. But he does not, as Gummere states, "think the feeble ballads of Deloney better than Chevy Chase."³⁰ What he does say is that the old Chevy Chase is inferior in simplicity, nature, pathos, and melody to such ballads as "Fair Rosamond", "John Dory", "Little Musgrave and Lady Barnard", "Children in the Wood", etc.³¹ But he did not fall into the error of considering these ballads as ancient as the minstrel songs: "Those pieces which we now call old ballads, are comparatively modern, that is, of the latter end of the sixteenth century." And he adds: "Our most ancient popular ballads, if we may judge from the few specimens preserved, were singularly rude."³² Both Ritson's taste and judgment were in advance of his age; and in the matter of ballads his taste seldom lagged behind his judgment.

Ritson was a genuine admirer of the old popular ballad. He it was who first clearly differentiated song and ballad and gave the prevailing definition of ballad as a lyrical narrative.³³ With the true instinct of the

²⁷*Ibid.*, I, p. 50.

²⁸*Defense of Poetry*, ed. Cook, 1890, p. 29.

²⁹*The Art of English Poetry*, Ed. Arber, 1869, p. 85.

³⁰*Old English Ballads*, 1894, p. xxvi.

³¹*Ancient Songs*, pp. xxxiii-iv.

³²*Ibid.*, p. c.

³³*English Songs*, I, p. i. Motherwell, in *Minstrelsy, ancient and modern*, 1827, Preface, p. i; and Gummere, in *Old English Ballads*, p. xxxvi, give Ritson credit for the first clear-cut definition of ballad.

ballad lover, he declared that the genuine pieces of this species were not to be sought "in the works of Hamilton, Thomson, Smollet, or even Ramsay; but in the productions of obscure and anonymous authors, of shepherds and milk maids, who actually felt the sensations they describe; of those, in short, who were destitute of all the advantages of science and education, and perhaps incapable of committing the pure inspiration of nature to writing."³⁴ On the subject of ballad authorship he says nothing further; but from this statement and his remarks on the origin of minstrelsy we can judge pretty closely what his attitude would have been. He would have espoused the theory of individual authorship, and scouted that of communal origin. The "composing folk" would have vanished into nothingness under his uncompromising demand for historical authentication.

On the preservation of ballads by oral tradition Ritson spoke more definitely. It was his belief that there yet remained in his own day many pieces of the true type current in the oral tradition of Scotland. He had made several unsuccessful attempts to take them down from recitation; but his own failure did not cause him to deny that other persons, perhaps possessing greater tact, had been more fortunate. But he professed himself to be an incompetent judge of the antiquity and genuineness of many of the pieces published as "from tradition". Where he had not an ancient manuscript as a guide, he was almost lost. In such a case he confessed that his judgment was necessarily based on one or both of the following tests: the irregular style, and the pathetic simplicity of the genuine ballad. If judiciously applied, these tests would not often lead one astray. Of one principle, however, Ritson was very certain, viz., that oral transmission alters and tends always to degrade the material. "Obsolete phrases", he says, "will be perpetually changing for those better understood, and what the memory loses the invention must supply. So that a performance of genius and merit, as the purest stream becomes polluted by the foulness of its channel, may in time be degraded to the vilest jargon. Tradition, in short, is a species of alchemy which converts gold into lead."³⁵ With keen critical insight he remarked that the effect of tradition was "degrading" only to the form, to the words, but not to the substance of the ballad—that remained unaltered.³⁶ While the "description and sentiment" remained the same,

³⁴*Scottish Songs*, I, p. lxxix.

³⁵*Ibid.*, p. lxxxii.

³⁶This conclusion, unassailable as it is, was in the present instance based on a false premise. To illustrate the transforming power of tradition, Ritson compared a popular version of "The Wee Wee Man" with a fourteenth century manuscript which he erroneously considered to be its original. Child prints the manu-

the "expressions and allusions" fluctuated with the times and communities through which they passed, so that no single piece was preserved in oral tradition exactly as it had been originally composed. The advocates of oral tradition in Percy's day, and especially the Ossianic enthusiasts, insisted that every piece current in the mouth of the folk was sung exactly as it had been composed. On this point Ritson remarked in conclusion:

"Had the 'Canterbury Tales' of Chaucer been preserved to the present time in the same manner, there would not have remained one single word which had fallen from the pen of that venerable bard: they would have been as completely, though not quite so elegantly modernized, as they are by Dryden and Pope: and yet it is pretended that the poems of Ossian have been preserved immaculate for more than a thousand years."³⁷

Ritson displayed a sincere love for the reliques of antiquity and an ardor in collecting and preserving the rude remains of the past. He repeatedly urged the publication of ballads and minstrel songs and declared that one of his highest ambitions in making his own collections was to inspire others of a like nature.³⁸ He insisted, however, that these collections should be made scientifically and with absolute fidelity to originals, whether oral or written. But students of popular poetry in Ritson's day were not accustomed to apply a stern critical faculty or a cold judgment to ballads and romances. To these they preferred to apply the test of feeling or taste. Percy gave the first note-worthy example of this method in the *Reliques*; and here again Ritson joined issue with him. The critic's disgust with Percy's manner of handling his professedly ancient material led him quite early to question the very existence of the folio manuscript. On Ritson's conduct in this matter there has been much half-informed writing,³⁹ and it will not be impertinent to review his comments.

script in an appendix. He remarks that this poem stands in somewhat the same relation to the ballad of the "Wee Wee Man" as the poem of Thomas of Ercaldoune does to the ballad of Thomas Rymer, "but with the important difference that there is no reason for deriving the ballad from the poem in this instance." *Op. Cit.*, I, p. 329.

³⁷*Scotish Songs*, I, p. lxxxii. Ritson was always outspoken against the Ossian imposture. See especially *Ibid.*, I, p. xxii and *English Songs*, I, p. xxxvi.

³⁸See Prefaces to all the collections, especially *Ancient Songs*, I, p. ciii and *Scotish Songs*, I, p. cxix.

³⁹See Surtees, *History of Durham*, III, p. 193 ff.; *Dibdin's Decameron*, III, p. 338 ff.; and Park's notes to *English Songs*. Pickford writes: "Ritson denied the existence of the manuscript: it is said in order to refute this charge, the fine portrait of Percy, painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds, had, in compliance with his own request, the disputed manuscript Folio placed in his hand, in order to show that

The first published evidence of Ritson's doubt as to the existence of the famous manuscript occurs in the *Observations* on Warton, 1782 (p. 11): "You say you think you have somewhere seen a romance in verse, entitled, 'The Turks and Gawaine'. The Bishop of Dromore says he has it in his folio MS. Did you ever see THAT?" This ironical challenge, in itself, simply implies doubt of Warton's having seen the manuscript, not of its reality. The next statement expresses doubt, but not yet denial of its authenticity. He is commenting, in the *Remarks* on Shakespeare, 1783 (p. 167), on the "unreasonable practise" of commentators in referring their readers to rare books which it is virtually impossible for them ever to see. Percy has here made reference to the poem of "John the Reeve", and Ritson remarks:

"never was this absurdity carried to such an extent of mockery as it is in the present instance; where the learned prelate very *cooly* orders us to *inspect* a poem, only extant, as he is well assured, and has elsewhere told us, in a certain Folio MS. in *his own possession*, which, *perhaps*, no one *ever saw*, and which (if it really exist) he will, for his own sake, take effectual care that no one else shall see."

In a second publication of the year 1783, Ritson remarked with great justice that "the genuineness of the pieces in the *Reliques* cannot be properly investigated or determined without an inspection of the original manuscript from which they are said to be extracted."⁴⁰ This was one of the earliest, if not the very first, of the demands upon Percy to publish his manuscript. But requests and threats and demands were to be equally unavailing for nearly a century.

Some time after these attacks Percy began to exercise himself to convince Ritson of his error. He asked J. C. Walker, a mutual friend, to undertake the task of persuading the critic of the existence of the manuscript. Walker wrote to Ritson and told Percy that in doing so, "I had little more to do than to transcribe your Lordship's letter changing as I proceeded, the second to the first person."⁴¹ Walker was not far wrong in his conjecture that he had "opened Ritson's eyes". The critic replied immediately:

"As a publication of uncommon elegance and poetical merit I have always been, and still am, a warm admirer of Bishop Percy's *Reliques*, and although I

it had an actual existence." Life of Percy in Hales and Furnivall edition of the Folio manuscript, I, p. xlvii. The portrait here referred to was painted in May, 1773 (see the general Introduction of Hales and Furnivall, p. liii), and Ritson's earliest comment on the manuscript appeared late in 1782.

⁴⁰*English Songs*, I, p. lxxvj.

⁴¹Sept. 22, 1789, Nichols, *Lit. Illust.*, VII, p. 710. Percy took little public notice of Ritson, but he made numerous private efforts to turn aside the critic's shafts.

have been persuaded that he has not on every occasion been so scrupulously attentive to his originals as I think the work required, I shall be very glad to find the idea unfounded, and readily confess that what you have been so obliging as to tell me about the Folio MS. has in a great measure removed my prejudice on that head. The limits of a letter will not permit me to enter fully into the discussion of a question upon which I believe a good deal may be said. In the course of some prefatory matter to a book which ought to have come out two or three years ago, but which I hope to receive and have the pleasure of transmitting to you in a short time, you will perceive the grounds upon which I have ventured to doubt the authenticity or at least the fidelity of this celebrated publication."⁴²

Walker at once communicated the substance of this letter to Percy with the comment: "Thus have I, without a breach of confidence, opened Mr. Ritson's mind to your Lordship."⁴³

The publication to which Ritson referred in the letter just quoted was *Ancient Songs and Ballads*, 1790. In the Preface he acknowledged his error: "The existence of this MS., if ever questioned, is now placed beyond the possibility of a doubt. But", he significantly adds, "it appears to have suffered much by ill usage." He cites a dozen poems in which "the learned collector has preferred his ingenuity to his fidelity, without the least intimation to the reader." From the great number of such instances in the *Reliques* he concludes that "no confidence can be placed in any of the 'old minstrel ballads' inserted in that collection, and not to be found elsewhere."⁴⁴ With perfect candor he admitted that he had no objection to Percy's filling out the defective pieces with verses of his own; but with advanced ideals of editing he insisted that the new should have been clearly distinguished from the old. Percy defended many of his errors by his distant removal from the press at the time of printing, and Ritson, with his usual keenness, suggested that he "would perceive the justice of confining this excuse to the first edition."⁴⁵

Percy's friends now became interested in his defense. Pinkerton outlined a statement of the authenticity of the manuscript, which was to

⁴²Nov. 4, 1789, *Letters*, I, p. 152.

⁴³Nov. 7, 1789, Nichols, *Lit. Illust.*, VII, p. 711. Later Percy accused Walker of lukewarmness and said his conduct reflected on his moral character. This was because Walker remained in the good graces of Ritson and was mentioned with praise in the Preface to *Scottish Songs*. Walker answered Percy that he had convinced Ritson of the existence of the manuscript but was unable to persuade him further until he could, by an inspection of the document, verify his own conviction that the Bishop had 'dropped no unacknowledged flowers' in the *Reliques*. Spring, 1794, *Ibid.*, VII, p. 725.

⁴⁴*Ancient Songs*, I, p. xxix ff.

⁴⁵Ritson to Walker, January 1, 1790, Nichols, *Lit. Illust.*, VII, p. 725.

be signed by a number of prominent literary men, and he suggested that the manuscript itself be deposited in a public place for inspection. To this Percy would not consent, exclaiming:

"This was the very end to which Mr. Ritson had been driving. . . . But he shall be disappointed: the manuscript shall never be exposed to his sight in my lifetime; and, as I have no other resource, I hope yet to procure some respectable family name, that may be generously interposed as a shield, before one whom the assailant knows to be incapable, from the peculiarities of his situation, of self-defense."⁴⁶

The manuscript was accordingly deposited for nearly a year at the house of Nicol, the printer, while the fourth edition of the *Reliques* was passing through the press. It was inspected by Barrington, Cracherode, Farmer, Steevens, Malone, and Reed, whose names are appealed to in the Advertisement to that edition in support of the description of the manuscript there given.⁴⁷ Of these men, at least Steevens, and perhaps others, while convinced of the existence of the manuscript and of its correspondence with the printed copy in one or two particular ballads which he had examined carefully, could not be brought to subscribe to the veracity of the *Reliques* as a whole.⁴⁸ Ritson himself had long since given over the idea of denying the existence of the manuscript; but Percy and his friends continued to remark on this point with the apparent object of drawing attention from the critic's more pertinent and less easily answered objections to the way in which it had been handled.

In the "Dissertation on Romance and Minstrelsy" occurs Ritson's final judgment on the *Reliques*. It may be repeated that he nowhere disputes the existence of the manuscript "in its present mutilated and miserable condition"; but he still insists that Percy has "fairly and honestly printed scarcely one single poem, song, or ballad" from it. In justification of this judgment, antithetical as it was to the prevailing

⁴⁶July 28, 1792. See the *Literary Correspondence of John Pinkerton*, 2 vols., London, 1830. Contrast with the sentiment of the above letter the assertion that prior to Ritson's attack Percy had intended to bequeath his Folio Manuscript to him, "thinking as he himself owned, it could not be in better hands." *Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. XCV, i, p. 486-8. The authenticity of this statement is highly conjectural.

⁴⁷Park is in error in stating, *English Songs*, I, p. lxxvi, note, that Ritson had it in his power to inspect the manuscript at this time. See Percy's declaration of hostility, above.

⁴⁸See Nares to Percy, Dec. 28, 1804, Nichols, *Lit. Illus.*, VII, pp. 606-7; and *British Critic*, Jan., 1805.

opinion, he summarized, in equally revolutionary terms, his conception of an editor's function.

"To correct the obvious errors of an illiterate transcriber, to supply irremediable defects, and to make sense of nonsense, are certainly essential duties of an editor of ancient poetry, provided he act with integrity and publicity; but secretly to suppress the original text, and insert his own fabrications for the sake of providing more refined entertainment for readers of taste and genius, is no proof of either judgment, candor, or integrity."⁴⁹

Then he printed "The Marriage of Sir Gawaine", placing the "amended" copy from the first edition of the *Reliques* by the side of the "original" as given in the fourth, designating by different type Percy's additions. The contrast brought out by this method was only intensified, and Ritson's generalization as to the faulty character of the whole work was verified, by the Hales and Furnivall edition of the Folio manuscript sixty-five years later. "The purchasers and perusers of such a collection are deceived and imposed upon", Ritson declared; "the pleasure they receive is derived from the idea of antiquity, which, in fact, is perfect illusion."

Percy's defense of his method was that "the rudeness of the more obsolete poems", and "the tediousness of the longer narratives", must be atoned for by "little elegant pieces of the lyric kind", in order for them to appeal to "a polished age like the present."⁵⁰ And modern critics and historians of literature, following his lead, declare with one accord that the plan pursued was the only one which would have insured a kindly reception to these rude remains of antiquity. But Ritson counselled thus:

"If the ingenious editor had published all his imperfect poems by correcting the blunders of puerility or inattention, and supplying the defects of barbarian ignorance, with proper distinction of type, it would not only have gratified the austere antiquary, but also provided refined entertainment for every reader of taste and genius."⁵¹

This simple device seems not to have suggested itself to any one of the critics of the last century. They are accustomed to consider the revival of interest in popular poetry, along with other romantic manifestations, as largely an emotional growth which would have been killed, or indefinitely retarded, by the introduction of the purely intellectual and critical. But it is at least an open question whether the mere distinction of type suggested by Ritson would not have left the immediate effects of the

⁴⁹*Metrical Romances*, I, p. 70.

⁵⁰Preface to *Reliques*.

⁵¹*Metrical Romances*, I, p. 70.

Reliques substantially the same; and there can be no doubt that many a genuine ancient piece would have been preserved and that the famous and valuable Folio manuscript would have been given to the world of scholarship in its primitive state a century earlier than it was.⁵²

The third group of topics in the prefatory dissertations is Scottish poetry and history. Ritson's point of departure here was quite similar to that in the second division, with the emphasis now upon Pinkerton and Scotland rather than upon Percy and England. Again it was the detection of forgery and literary deception which led him into a thorough investigation of a relatively unexplored field. On the publication of Pinkerton's *Select Scottish Ballads*, 1783,⁵³ which professed to be "now first published from tradition in their original perfection", Ritson demonstrated in a letter to the *Gentleman's Magazine*,⁵⁴ that "The laird of Woodhouslie", "Lord Livingston", "Binnorie", "The death of Men teith", "I wish I were where Helen lies", the second part of "Hardy-knute", and two pretended fragments, were "artful and impudent forgeries". Although Pinkerton was allowed, through the singular conduct of the editor of the *Gentleman's*, to print a denial of Ritson's charges before the letter was published, and although he took counsel of friends⁵⁵ as to how he should dispose of his calumniator, yet in *Ancient Scottish Poems*, 1786, he confessed the deception and pleaded for forgiveness, urging in extenuation of his guilt, youth and a laudable desire to please the public.⁵⁶ But with this expression of penitence did not go an

⁵²It may be asserted that a comparison of the popular reception of the *Reliques* and any one of Ritson's collections would be a sufficient test of this argument. It cannot be denied that Percy's interpolations and additions contributed greatly to the popularity of his work. The question is, would it have been less popular with the new distinguished from the old in some simple and unobtrusive manner? Ritson's collections could never have been such general favorites as the *Reliques* because he lacked the Bishop's poetic gift. Had either of them possessed the excellencies of both, the scholar and the general reader would have been equally served.

⁵³Originally, *Scottish Tragic Ballads*, London, 1781.

⁵⁴Letter signed "Anti-Scot", *Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. LIV, ii, pp. 312-14.

⁵⁵Walpole advised Pinkerton to make a firm denial of the charges but by no means to display anger. *Pinkerton's Correspondence*, I, p. 87.

⁵⁶Ritson afterward gave it as his opinion that "had this letter never appeared these contemptible forgeries would have continued to disgrace the annals of Scottish poetry, till, at least, the pretence of antiquity had proved too slight a buoy to support the weight of their intrinsic dullness." *Scottish Songs*, I, p. lxxvi, note. This was not the only error of which Pinkerton was convinced by Ritson. Sept. 4, 1794, he wrote to Percy: "I must confess myself thoroughly convinced that Minstrel only implied musician, and was never used for a bard, maker, or poet; were I reprinting any former production in this way I would retract all my opinions to

altered conduct which should accompany a true change of heart. He continued to insert his own productions in "ancient" collections, meanwhile making a display of honesty by censuring, with poor grace indeed, other men who had practised deception.⁵⁷

Pinkerton again became involved with Ritson in 1792, when, in his *Scottish Poems*, he printed an imperfect version of "Sir Gavan and Sir Galeron of Galloway". This was from a manuscript of John Baynes, which fell to Ritson in 1787. Pinkerton requested permission to publish it, but Ritson refused on the ground that he intended to edit it himself. In spite of his promise that it should not be used, Pinkerton printed the romance and was scathingly rebuked for his perfidy in a communication to the *Gentleman's Magazine*, written by Ritson.⁵⁸ Pinkerton achieved his revenge for this letter in a violently denunciatory review of Ritson's *Scotish Songs*, in 1795.⁵⁹ This brought no public response from Ritson, though he remarked to friends on its "falsehood, impudence, and scurrility."⁶⁰ He said of Pinkerton, as Dr. Johnson of Goldsmith, "he only stumbles on truth by accident"; and he considered it "a thousand pities that John Pinkerton had not flourished in the age, and enjoyed the friendship of Geoffrey of Monmouth that he might have certified, with his sacred signature, the integrity and truth of the original manuscript of that veracious historian, as he did the no less genuine 'Shakspeariana', of William Ireland."⁶¹

Ritson's attack was undoubtedly intensified by Pinkerton's nationality. To Scotchmen he entertained an aversion as pronounced as that of Dr. Johnson. He lost no opportunity to satirize the Scotch, although he spent much labor and money in illustrating the antiquities of the

the contrary, though often repeated." After suggesting a rearrangement of Percy's Essay to distinguish the Minstrel proper from the poets and reciters, he adds: "Even granting all the passages cited in your favor, you must contend against hundreds on the opposite side. For a part, Ritson's book may be referred to." *Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. CII, ii, p. 125.

⁵⁷See his inconsistent censure of Ramsay in Preface to *Select Scottish Ballads*; and his abuse of those who believed in the authenticity of "Ossian", in his *Inquiry into the History of Scotland preceding the reign of Malcolm III or the year 1056*, 2 vols., London, 1790.

⁵⁸See *Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. LXIII, p. 33. Ritson complained to Harrison, February 14, 1793, that "the scoundrel of an editor had the impertinence to omit the best part of my letter." *Letters*, II, p. 10. A note in Douce's hand on the original manuscript, now Douce 324, Bodleian, supports Ritson's contention that Pinkerton printed the romance "in direct violation of his promise."

⁵⁹*Critical Review*, January, 1795. Reprinted in *The Letters of Joseph Ritson Esq. to Mr. George Paton*, Edinburgh, 1829.

⁶⁰*Letters*, II, pp. 67, 75.

⁶¹*The Life of King Arthur*, p. xviii, note.

North. His letters abound in sarcastic flings at the Scottish people, and he passed no occasion to sneer at them.⁶² His most vigorous pronouncement on the weakness of the Scottish character appeared in the "Essay on Scotch Song". There he sarcastically proposes as a subject of investigation for the new Royal Society, "Why the Scotch literati should be more particularly addicted to literary imposition than those of any other country." That they are, Ritson does not doubt. He agrees with Johnson that "a Scotchman must be a very sturdy moralist who does not love Scotland more than truth." Of the love of falsehood rather than of truth, he considers the many literary impostures perpetrated by Scotchmen an incontrovertible evidence.

"The forgeries of Hector Boethius, David Chalmers, George Buchanan, Thomas Dempster, Sir John Bruce, William Lauder, Archibald Bower, James Macpherson, and John Pinkerton, stamp a disgrace upon the national character, which ages of exceptionless integrity will be required to remove: an era, however, which, if one may judge from the detestation in which the most infamous and despicable of these imposters is universally held, has already commenced."⁶³

This characterization of Scotland as the breeding place of literary forgeries and of himself as the most notorious of the malefactors, Pinkerton undertook to refute in the review already noted of *Scotch Songs*. His argument is beside the point, for his sole defense is that other nations have been equally guilty. That the impostures listed by Ritson were a national disgrace, he could not gainsay.

In calling attention to the prevalence of literary deception in Scotland, and in condemning Pinkerton for his falsehoods, Ritson was only pushing forward his campaign for truth and candor in all editorial dealings. And because it was done with his customary violence and lack of restraint, his manner has attracted attention while his beneficial service has been ignored. But he was something more than a mere caviller. His strictures on faulty editorial methods were not without their effect and were of value in proportion as they cleared the way for critical and scholarly methods. A more immediately recognized service, because a more definitely constructive work, was rendered in his opposition to Pinkerton's "Gothic System" of Scottish history.

⁶²Cf. "I dread a Scotchman bringing ancient verses"; "shoals of Scotchmen are arriving in London every day; the difficulty I should imagine would be to find one going back"; "either accuracy or integrity is pretty extraordinary in a Scotchman"; etc., etc. *Letters, passim*.

⁶³*Scotch Songs*, I, p. lxiii. Ritson's personal contempt for Pinkerton may have misled his judgment in this last clause. Chalmers wrote to Constable, Oct. 27, 1803: "there seems to be a Pinkerton mania in Scotland." *Constable and his Literary Correspondents*, I, p. 411.

Although the Scottish people had long considered themselves a very ancient nation, a true investigation of the original sources of their history was slow in making its appearance. In 1526 Hector Boethius, the Geoffrey of Scottish history, by embellishing the Chronicles of Fordun⁶⁴ and Andrew of Wyntoun⁶⁵ and adding a list of fabulous kings, manufactured an historical development highly gratifying to the Scots of his and succeeding generations. Boethius was followed by Bishop Lesley,⁶⁶ and George Buchanan,⁶⁷ both of whom continued the list of imaginary kings. The antiquity of the Scots, and especially the veracity of this kingly chronology, was attacked by Roderic O'Flaherty⁶⁸ in 1685, but the first considerable attempt to sift fact from tradition was that undertaken in 1729 by the antiquary, Father Thomas Innes.⁶⁹ The service which he rendered was largely negative. He destroyed about half of the Scottish kings and winnowed out from the accepted history much of the trash of tradition. A further step in this direction was taken half a century later by Sir David Dalrymple,⁷⁰ but the works of both these men were concerned only with the middle ages of Scottish history. This left the very ancient times, the real source of all the misunderstanding of later ages, untouched so far as critical treatment was concerned.

The first to undertake an elucidation of this ancient period was Pinkerton. His *Dissertation on the origin and progress of the Scythians or Goths, being an Introduction to the ancient and modern history of Europe*, 1787, presents in somewhat general form the theory of the origin of the Scottish people which was developed more fully in his *Inquiry into the history of Scotland preceding the reign of Malcolm III., or 1056, including the authentic history of that period*, 1790. Pinkerton brought to his task a wide but not a thorough knowledge of mediæval history and an undisguised contempt of other laborers in the field. He recognized the necessity of grounding his history on authentic records, although not many of them were accessible to him and he did not always use honestly those available. With characteristic egotism he declared of his *Inquiry*, some time before its publication: "It is a

⁶⁴John of Fordun, *Chronica Gentis Scotorum*, 1384.

⁶⁵*Original cronykil of Scotland*, 1406.

⁶⁶*Historia Scotorum*, 1582.

⁶⁷*History of the Picts*, 1578.

⁶⁸*Ogygia seu rerum Hibernicarum chronologia*, London, 1685.

⁶⁹As an appendix to his *Critical Essay on the ancient inhabitants of Scotland*, 2 vols., London, 1729, he published some ancient chronicles and fragments of Scottish history.

⁷⁰*Annals of Scotland, from the accession of Malcolm III, surnamed Canmore, to the accession of Robert I.; and Annals of Scotland from the accession of Robert I., surnamed the Bruce, to the accession of the house of Stuart*, Edinburgh, 1776.

work which will fix the ancient history of my country upon the firm basis of ancient authorities, that nothing can shake. Men of science and all lovers of truth I shall convince: as for the rest, 'si vulgus vult decipi, decipiatur'."⁷¹ His work is ingenious, but its value was greatly impaired by an unreasoning aversion to the Celts and everything Celtic, and by the adoption of an erroneous theory concerning the "Pix", as he persistently calls them.

Pinkerton classified the ancient peoples of Scottish history under four divisions: the Celts, Britons, Picts, and Scots. According to his theory the Goths, originally Scythians, in the centuries before the Christian era came westward from the wilds of their native country and over-ran all northern Europe, subduing the original inhabitants and colonizing the territory. About the Christian era the Peuki tribe of the all-conquering Goths went from Scandinavia to northern England, where they conquered and all but annihilated the inferior Celts. The Celts were to the other inhabitants of Europe what the savages of America were to the European settlers there; and they remain to this day "a dishonored, timid, filthy, ignorant, and degraded race." The Goths settled in the Lowlands of Scotland and were known to the Romans as Picts. They were subjugated by Agricola but later established a kingdom which spread over all Scotland. They were never conquered but were united with the Scots, a Celtic tribe from Ireland, when Kenneth by marriage succeeded to the Pictish throne in 503. After that time the Scots became insignificant, only giving their name to the kingdom. From 503 to the present day the Picts have continued supreme in the Lowlands. The Scottish vernacular of that section had its origin in the Teutonic dialect spoken by the Picts, or early invading Goths.

Pinkerton's theory did not go long unchallenged. Ritson attacked the earlier statement of it in a cursory fashion in the "Essay on Scottish Songs". There he only denied the general hypothesis without going into detail and charitably ascribed to insanity Pinkerton's treatment of the Celts as a "medial race between beasts and men". But he did not wish to let the matter rest in this incomplete state. Upon the publication of Pinkerton's *Inquiry* he was still more strongly convinced that "a history of the Celts by a person of learning and industry is much wanted." Knowing that John Lanne Buchanan had undertaken a reply to Pinkerton, Ritson awaited the appearance of the *Defense of the Scots Highlanders in general and some learned characters in particular*, 1794. But when this work proved to be what he had anticipated,⁷² unscholarly and inadequate, he took up the subject of Scottish history

⁷¹Pinkerton to Percy, Nov. 19, 1785, in *Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. CII, ii, pp. 121-2.

⁷²In anticipation of the publication of this book Ritson wrote to Paton, March

himself. From 1795 until his death he spent much time in this field, but the results of his labor were not published during his lifetime. In *Caledonia*, 1807, George Chalmers⁷³ summarized the various systems of Scottish history up to his own day. He expressed his opposition to Pinkerton's theory but did not enter into a scientific examination of the evidence. It remained for Ritson to vindicate the Celts and to expose the fallacy of the Pictish origin of the modern Scottish dialect, in his *Memoirs of the Celts* and *Annals of the Caledonians*. He had access to a wider range of ancient material than Pinkerton; his treatment of it was scientific; and his results were correspondingly more accurate. Although he could not have anticipated the rapid advance which has since been made in ethnological and linguistic science, yet he presented a large body of the authentic material upon which modern theories are based. The advance which he made over Pinkerton and the degree of his approach to present-day theories will be revealed by a brief examination of the *Memoirs* and *Annals*.

Speaking very strictly, it is inaccurate to say that Ritson had no definite historical policy in these volumes. He followed his usual method of amassing and arranging in chronological order all the historical references and poetical allusions which he could gather. But he avowedly held a brief for the Celts, and even though his candor led him to insert every pertinent reference to the subject whether it favored the Celts or not, yet his footnotes and casual comments leave no doubt as to his own beliefs. With an astonishing array of evidence from scores of early writers he traces the movements of the Celts on the continent. Instead of being an inferior and degraded race they were for several centuries before Christ the most powerful and numerous people in Europe. Eventually conquered by the Romans, they became disintegrated and were gradually absorbed by the other nations. "People of a Celtic race are yet to be found in Wales, Ireland, the north of Scotland, the Hebrides,

5, 1794: "Pinkerton's treatment of the 'Celtic savages' is to be speedily resented in print by the Rev. John Lane Buchanan . . . who seems in fact, to be as very a Celt as his antagonist could possibly wish for. I am sorry to find so good a cause in the hands of such an incompetent advocate." *Letters*, II, p. 46.

⁷³Chalmers was by some thought to be the author of a review of Pinkerton's *Inquiry* which appeared in the first number of the *Edinburgh Review*. Apropos of this he wrote to Constable, Oct. 27, 1803: "I was surprised to learn from you that I should have been considered by anybody at Edinburgh to be the author of the Vindication of the Celts, which is so unlike anything that I ever wrote. If I had written on that subject, I would have beaten Pinkerton's brains out in one half the space. Pinkerton's Goths is a tissue of interpolation and falsehood, fiction, and impertinence; but I have never published anything upon the matter." *Constable and his Literary Correspondents*, I, p. 411.

the Isle of Man, Armorica, and in a district of the Alps, called the Pais de Vaud."⁷⁴ The primitive language of the Celts, dialects of which were still spoken by the people in these districts, Ritson said was not Teutonic, although it bore evidences of relationship with Germanic. This was about all that could be said on the subject before the introduction of comparative philology. Modern ethnology has confirmed Ritson's thesis on the predominance of the early Celts and has even denominated the time from the fifth to the third century before Christ, the "Celtic period".⁷⁵

The *Annals of the Caledonians, Picts, and Scots; and of Strathclyde, Cumberland, Galloway, and Murray* is an attempt to give a chronological account of the early inhabitants of Caledonia from the most ancient and authentic documents. The main object of Ritson's labors here was to disprove Pinkerton's theory concerning the Teutonic origin of the Picts and the consequent influence of the Pictish tongue on the modern lowland Scottish, and at the same time he had opportunity to present further evidence of the importance of the Celts. From the testimony of Herodotus, Caesar, Tacitus, Bede, and others it appears that the most ancient inhabitants of the British Isles were the Celts,⁷⁶ who had no doubt settled there in the great Celtic period. The first mention of the Picts is about 300, when they are referred to by Caesar, Tacitus, and others, as enemies to the Britons.⁷⁷ Coming as they did from the continent to Ireland and thence to Caledonia, Ritson concluded that they were originally Celts but by long separation from that branch of the race which had settled in Britain had become a distinct nation and made war on their own kinsmen.⁷⁸ In 449 the South Britons called in the Saxons to aid them against the Picts and Scots, who were driven into the north. The Scots, originally Irish, and admitted by Pinkerton to be Celts, contended with the Picts against the South Britons. When these two nations were forced back by the combined efforts of the Saxons and Britons they fell to warring among themselves, with the result that the Picts were overcome and all but annihilated. This in itself was fatal to Pinkerton's Celto-Gothic system. By a wilful perversion of history he declared that it was the Scots who were exterminated. But the Scots gave their name to the country and to the language and from 503 are mentioned by historians with increasing frequency, while the

⁷⁴*Memoirs of the Celts*, Preface, p. x.

⁷⁵See Deniker, *The Races of Man*, 2nd edition, London, 1900, p. 317 ff. for a statement of modern views concerning the peoples of Europe, especially the Celts.

⁷⁶*Annals of the Caledonians*, I, p. 13.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, I, p. 71 ff.

⁷⁸Similar instances are not infrequent in the history of the races of men. See Deniker, *Op. Cit.*, p. 323 ff.

Picts are all but forgotten and their dialect and racial characteristics are preserved only in the northern islands and the remote highlands. How the Scots, admittedly an inferior race, should be able permanently to impose upon a people superior in every way, their language, customs, and institution must ever remain a mystery to those who support Pinkerton's theory of the Gothic origin of the Picts.

Perhaps the most important phase of this whole discussion was that concerning the Pictish influence on the modern Scottish dialect of the Lowlands. Pinkerton argued that the Picts were Goths and hence spoke a Teutonic dialect. He supported his theory by evidence from history. Tacitus said the Caledonians had a Germanic origin. The ancient Caledonians were Picts; therefore the Picts spoke a Germanic dialect. The Picts were known to have inhabited the Lowlands, and there a Teutonic dialect is now spoken while there is no evidence of any other having been prevalent. Therefore, he argued, the modern Scottish dialect of the Lowlands had its origin in the language spoken by the Picts.

Pinkerton's theory was questioned from the beginning, but it gained rather wide popular credence and did not want the support of students of poetry and language. The wide-spread interest in the Ossianic and other Erse poetry, and in all northern antiquities, was undoubtedly fostered by the misconception that the Gaelic people were Teutons and their language a dialect of Germanic.⁷⁹ James Sibbald, who published a *Chronicle of Scottish poetry from the thirteenth century to the Union of the Crowns*, 1802, lent his support to the general theory outlined by Pinkerton. John Jamieson, after an extended review of the evidence, in the introductory dissertation to his *Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language*, 1808, declared himself convinced that the dialect of the Lowland Scots was not a daughter to English Saxon but was a sister language derived from the Teutonic speech of the Picts. Such a theory as this was possible only before the science of comparative philology had differentiated the various branches of the Indo-European family and shown something of their inter-relations. It is to be noted, however, that Ritson anticipated the conclusions of modern science in his treatment of the Picts. These people, he said,

⁷⁹The great vogue of the Ossianic poems in Germany must have been due in part at least to this feeling of racial kinship. See Joseph Texte, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau et les origines du cosmopolitisme littéraire*, Paris, 1895, p. 388 ff. Some hint of the importance of the national spirit in the Romantic movement is given by Farley, *Scandinavian Influences in the English Romantic movement*, 1903. The part played by ethnological and linguistic theories in the literary movements of the late eighteenth century is an interesting problem, but it has never been adequately considered.

were not Teutons but Celts. Their language was therefore a Gaelic dialect and could have had little if any influence on modern Scottish. The Gaelic, or Erse, was not wholly unintelligible to English speaking persons of his day because it was ultimately derived from the same root as the Saxon and would have many characteristics in common with it. Yet it was a mistake, he maintained, to attempt to apply this parallel to Scottish and Saxon. The dialect of the Lowlands was identical with the Saxon spoken north of the Humber and it was folly to separate them.⁸⁰ To Ritson's astonishing array of historical evidence little of incontrovertible authenticity has since been added. The study of philology has resulted in the common acceptance of certain general principles governing inter-relations of languages. By these Ritson's theory concerning the Scottish and Pictish dialects is supported.⁸¹

Ritson's whole treatment of the Scottish question was controversial in nature. It was something more, to be sure, but it had its inception in controversy. With all its learning and wide reading, the "Essay on Scottish Song" was an unblushing attempt to contradict Pinkerton. Ritson's various manuscript collections of Scottish songs and ballads were made with the object of teaching Pinkerton how his work should be done. And the two historical compilations were undertaken with no other purpose than to correct the theories of Pinkerton. A similar thread of personal controversy runs through all the discussions of romances and minstrelsy. It is unfortunate for Ritson's fame and for the permanent value of his work that he was so persistently the antagonist. To his contemporaries the constant ill-nature of his comments overshadowed everything else, and since his death he has been uniformly criticised for this weakness and only sporadically commended for his services to scholarship. He did much, however, that deserves praise. Disregarding his reprehensible manner, the ends he attained were worth striving for. He caused both Percy and Pinkerton to alter their methods and undoubtedly inspired many other editors to a more faithful and more scholarly treatment of their originals. Besides this impulse to correctness, he furnished students of old poetry, of ballads and romances, and of Scottish history with a fund of material from first sources such as had not previously been assembled.

⁸⁰See *Annals*, especially I, p. 25 ff; p. 135 ff; and II, p. 25 ff.

⁸¹W. F. Skene applies to Pinkerton's hypothesis the reasoning of Ritson, judged in the light of later scientific developments, but makes no mention of the critic. *Celtic Scotland*, 2nd edition, 3 vols., Edinburgh, 1886, I, p. 196 ff. James Ferguson has produced topographical and linguistic evidence to prove that the Celtic element in the native population of the modern Scotch Lowlands is much larger than is generally believed. See "The Celtic Element in Lowland Scotland", *Celtic Review*, Vol. I, pp. 246-60; 321-32.

CHAPTER VIII

REVOLUTIONARY TRAITS DEATH

Visit to Paris—Interest in libraries—Enthusiastic over Revolution—Announces strong republican sympathy—Adopts republican forms in letters—Professes to be disciple of Paine and Rousseau—Fears for personal safety during prosecution of Revolutionary leaders—Becomes disgusted with them—Holcroft and Godwin—Finally gives up hope of English republic—Religious views—Discounts historical importance of Christianity—Has no respect for church or churchmen—Sneers at religious sects—An atheist—No belief in future existence—Follows high ethical standard—Spelling vagaries—Waning interest stimulated by visit to Paris—Nature of suggested improvements—His weakness—An orthographic mutineer—Vegetarianism—Converts nephew and sister—*Abstinence from Animal Food as a Moral Duty*—Contents—Contemporary comments—Illness increased by diet—Pecuniary distress—Endeavors to insure life—Apoplectic strokes—Violent insanity—Death—Burial—Disposition of library.

To the casual observer the outstanding eccentricities of Ritson's conduct and belief seem to have taken their rise chiefly in the revolutionary ardor which resulted from his visit to Paris in 1791. But they were fairly constant factors in his life, and he was only emboldened to espouse them more vigorously after his foreign journey. In the early days of 1788 Ritson was considering a trip to Paris or Madrid, "being ashamed", as he said, "to have lived so long in the world and seen so little of it."¹ Events in France, culminating in the States-General and the storming of the Bastille, combined with his own busy-ness to deter him for more than three years from translating his thoughts into action. The temporary lull which succeeded the first violent outbursts of popular feeling in France seemed, to the most optimistic, to indicate that the Revolution was ended. On June 9, 1791, Ritson wrote to Harrison:

"My desire to reside for a few weeks at or near Paris has been increasing ever since the Revolution, and is in reality very strong; which you will readily conceive when I give it as a decided opinion that no people ancient or modern was ever so deserving of admiration."²

¹*Letters*, I, p. 132.

²*Ibid.*, I, p. 193.

Shortly after August 20 of that year³ he set off for Paris in company with his friend William Shield. From Paris Shield proceeded, with a number of agreeable foreigners,⁴ by easy stages to Rome and did not return to England till 1792. Ritson remained in Paris for a couple of months.⁵ From his great interest in literary and historical antiquities one would expect him to avail himself of this opportunity to visit the splendid libraries and museums of Paris. He did improve this opportunity in a way, for immediately upon his return to London he wrote to Harrison:

"Paris abounds with antiquities, and public monuments, which you would be delighted to see. There are three magnificent libraries; two of which at least, are infinitely beyond either Bodley's or the Museum, both for printed books and manuscripts. When united as they probably will be in a little time, they will form the first collection in the world. All three are open to everyone who chooses to go, without previous applications or any exceptions. The French read a great deal, and even the common people (such, i mean, as cannot be expected from their poverty, to have had a favorable education, for there is now no other distinction of rank,) are better acquainted with their ancient history than the English nobility are with ours. They talk familiarly of *Charlechauve*, and at St. Dennis i observed that all the company, mostly peasants or mechanics, recognized with pleasure the portrait of *La Pucelle*."⁶

It does not appear, however, that he spent a great deal of time laboring in these institutions, for in his subsequent publications he made but one specific reference to the material which came in his way there.⁷ This was evidently not a business trip. He seems to have made the visit for amusement only, and that he found in an absorbing interest in political events.

Ritson arrived in Paris at a peculiarly happy moment. The ill-advised flight of the King had been abruptly terminated by his enforced return to Paris in July. After the mutterings of discontent with the monarch's conduct had died away, attention centered mainly on the new Constitution. In early September this document was completed,

³R. H. Legge, who wrote the life of Shield in the *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, follows the erroneous statement in G. G. Cunningham's *History of England in the lives of Englishmen*, London, 1853, Vol. VIII, p. 361, that this journey was taken in August, 1792.

⁴See Shield's letters to Holcroft, Holcroft's *Memoirs*, p. 308 ff.

⁵Cunningham and Legge state that Ritson continued to Italy, but this is clearly an error. Ritson makes no mention of any other city than Paris, and Shield does not refer to him as a member of the party in the later stages of the extended journey. Ritson had certainly returned to London by November 26.

⁶*Letters*, I, pp. 203-4.

⁷In the Scots' College he saw the testament and letters of Mary, Queen of Scots, "blotted with her tears". *Scottish Songs*, I, p. xlix.

revised, and accepted by Louis. Upon this signal success of their designs the populace became jubilant, and there were gala-nights in Paris. The sole topic of conversation seemed to be the Constitution, and the people were happy, forgiving, and hopeful.⁸ The effect of this exuberance and enthusiasm upon Ritson is shown in his correspondence. He says nothing of struggle, of lawlessness, of bloodshed; but he extols the principles for which the people were fighting and praises in unmeasured language the new constitution. To Harrison he writes, in the first letter after his return:

"Well, and so I got to Paris at last; and was highly gratified with the whole of my excursion. I admire the French more than ever. They deserve to be free, and they really are so. You have read their new constitution: can anything be more admirable? We, who pretend to be free, you know, have no constitution at all. . . . As to modern politics, and the principles of the Constitution, one would think that half the people in Paris had no other employment than to study and talk about them. I have seen a fishwoman reading the journal of the National assembly to her neighbor who appeared to listen with all the avidity of Shakespeare's blacksmith. You may now consider this government as completely settled, and a counter-revolution as utterly impossible: They are more than a match for all the slaves in Europe."⁹

To another correspondent he writes in the same strain:

"My sentiments are and ever have been so entirely correspondent to the ruling measures that I had only to rejoice at seeing a theory I had so long admired reduced to practise. I know that you and I do not exactly agree in our political principles. Your creed if I mistake not, is that a few men, whether born with boots and spurs or at least who have got them on, have a right to bridle, saddle and harness the rest, and ride or drive them with as much gentleness or violence as they see occasion; and that it is much more advisable for the latter to jog on peaceably and quietly than by kicking or flinging to provoke a larger portion of hard blows and hunger. This I believe is a pretty fair representation. . . . They order these matters very differently in the country I was speaking of, which, owing to the dissemination and establishment of those sacred and fundamental principles of liberty and equality, enjoys a degree of happiness and prosperity to which it had hitherto been a stranger: but which is merely typical of that to which it will shortly arrive."¹⁰

Coming from Ritson this extravagant praise of democratic government is quite surprising. When it is recalled that he who now states that his "sentiments are and ever have been entirely correspondent to the ruling measures" of the French revolution, is the same, who, eleven years before had compiled, and only eight years earlier had revised

⁸Carlyle, *History of the French Revolution*, London, 1898, Vol. I, p. 195ff.

⁹*Letters*, I, p. 203-4.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, I, pp. 208-9.

for a second edition, the *Tables of the Descent of the Crown*, and who, in publications ranging through a decade had lost no opportunity to condemn in violent language those who under whatsoever pretext had sought to set aside the "legitimate and inviolable lineal descent" to the English throne,¹¹ there appears to be a glaring inconsistency. When it is remembered, too, that he who now declares with so much confidence that "we have no constitution at all", is the same who, on several occasions heartily condemned the Revolution Parliament with having done more to destroy the English constitution than all other parliaments had done to preserve it,¹² it is still more apparent that a radical change of belief has taken place. It is not difficult to substantiate Ritson's statement that he had always admired the French people, but his earlier remarks concerning them have nothing to do with the revolutionary temper which they later exhibited. For instance, he strenuously denied the validity of the claim of Henry V. to the throne of France and took occasion to commend Joan of Arc and to praise the ill-starred Dauphin.¹³ He likewise lauded the poetic ability and the keen intellectual qualities of the French.¹⁴ But none of these comments can, without violence, be adduced in support of his praise of the principles for which the French people struggled in the Revolution.

It is clear that Ritson's political faith had suffered a definite reversal. The erstwhile Jacobite is now an avowed Jacobin; the sometime Tory is now a Whig of the most liberal complexion. He declared that he "detested every species of aristocracy"; yet he seems to waver slightly in the advice he gives his nephew concerning the authority of historians.

"Always prefer Tory or Jacobite writers", he says, "the Whigs are the greatest liars in the world. You consult history for facts, not principles. The Whigs, I allow, have the advantage in the latter, and this advantage they are constantly laboring to support by a misrepresentation of the former."¹⁵

But this is only his historical judgment asserting itself in the midst of enthusiasm. The critical temper which served admirably in all his literary labors did not entirely desert him in his political zeal. By its aid he discovered the unworthy motives of many of the republican leaders in his own country. But this was after he had joined their ranks and had been for some time associated with them.

¹¹See *Remarks*, pp. 84, 137, 188, etc.

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 124; *English Songs*, I, p. lxxxii.

¹³*Remarks*, p. 104; Preface to *Ancient Songs*.

¹⁴See Prefaces to *English Songs* and *Ancient Songs*.

¹⁵*Letters*, II, p. 121.

The spirit of the revolutionists had a firm grip upon Ritson. Almost immediately upon his return to England he began addressing his intimate friends as "Citizen" and used the complimentary close of the republicans in most of his letters. Early in 1793 he adopted the new republican calendar and struggled for some months to become perfect in its use. At the same time he declared himself a disciple of the leading philosophers of the Revolution and adorned the walls of his chamber with portraits of Paine, Rousseau, and Voltaire. He realized that this was not a step in the direction of popularity, for on sending *Inégalité des hommes* to his nephew, he remarked:

"The excellent author looks down upon me; on the other side of the fireplace hangs the sarcastic Voltaire; while the enlightened and enlightening Thomas fronts the door: which is probably the reason, by the way, that scarce anybody has entered it since he made his appearance."¹⁶

During this period he renewed his friendship with Holcroft¹⁷ and sought the acquaintance of Godwin, Thelwall, and other Revolutionary leaders in England. He visited freely with these men and followed their political fortunes very closely.¹⁸ He advised his nephew to become familiar with their writings, which contained "much deep and just reflection as well as excellent writing." And he himself commented frequently on their publications as well as on their political ups and downs.¹⁹

The first few years after Ritson's return from Paris were, to use his own words, ticklish times for the advocates of Liberty and Equality in England. Thomas Hardy founded "The London Corresponding Society" in January, 1792. In September the Society sent a congratulatory address to the National Convention of France and before the end of the year was in correspondence "with every Society in Great Britain which had been instituted for the purpose of obtaining by legal and constitutional means a reform in the Commons' house of Parliament."²⁰ The rapid increase of the corresponding societies and their unconcealed intercourse with the republican leaders in France caused the Government to adopt stringent measures to suppress or exterminate them. The cooperation of Horne Tooke's "Society for Constitutional Information,"²¹ and John Thelwall's "Society of the Friends of the

¹⁶*Ibid.*, II, p. 39.

¹⁷Sidney Lee, in the *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, implies that Ritson first made the acquaintance of Holcroft at this time, but he knew him at Stockton.

¹⁸*Letters*, II, p. 34; Holcroft's *Memoirs*; C. K. Paul's *William Godwin, his friends and contemporaries*, 2 vols., London, 1876, Vol. I, p. 78.

¹⁹*Letters*, II, p. 49, 86, 112.

²⁰*Memoir of Thomas Hardy*, London, 1832, p. 24.

²¹See Alexander Stephens, *The Life of John Horne Tooke*, London, 1813.

People''²² with Hardy's organization resulted in the arrest of all the leaders in the summer of 1794. On October 5 true bills were returned against them and eight others. On October 28 Hardy's trial was begun amid great excitement. His acquittal, on November 5, was followed within a month by those of Horne Tooke and Thelwall. The Government's case was so weak that the rest of the defendants were discharged without trial, to the great delight of the people and the extreme relief of many members of the Societies who felt themselves to be under the surveillance of spies.²³

Ritson followed these trials with a great deal of interest, for his own strong sympathy with the defendants was known among his friends, and he well knew that one might be arrested on suspicion engendered by such sympathy. It seemed to be the custom of the government, he said, to suspect a man of Jacobinism and hang him for felony in order to be rid of him.²⁴ He was careful to write nothing that would incriminate him²⁵ and declared that he talked politics as little as possible, "in order to avoid Newgate,"²⁶ yet he seems not to have felt perfectly secure until after the Government had failed in two attempts at conviction. At the acquittal of Horne Tooke he breathed a sigh of relief and remarked that the storm had now blown over, and he considered himself safe.²⁷ The success of the Revolutionists in their first encounter with the Government gave them a great deal of confidence in the justice of their cause and, as is not unusual in such cases, they almost immediately destroyed the confidence of unprejudiced persons by extravagances and inconsistency. "Their constant cant" says Ritson, "is the force and energy of mind to which all opposition is to be ineffectual."²⁸ They declared that no member of their Society under suspicion should have hired defense at his trial but should depend upon his own eloquence and the undoubted justice of his case. While the leaders were perfectly willing to endorse this rule as an abstract principle, yet when their own safety was in jeopardy they exerted every effort to secure the best legal

²²See *The Life of John Thelwall*, London, 1837.

²³See J. Smith, *The Story of the English Jacobins*, London, 1881, and Howell's *State Trials*, London, 1816-28, Vols. XXIII-XXIV.

²⁴*Letters*, II, p. 103.

²⁵On March 5, 1794, he addressed Laing as "My friend" and explained the salutation thus: "I do not call you Citizen, lest, when I revisit your metropolis, your scoundrel judges should send me for fourteen years to Botany Bay; only I am in good hopes, before that event takes place, they will all be sent to the devil". *Ibid.*, II, p. 47.

²⁶*Ibid.*, II, p. 7.

²⁷*Ibid.*, II, p. 57.

²⁸*Ibid.*, II, p. 69.

talent in their behalf. Although it was Ritson's own theory that the innocent need no hired defense at the criminal bar, yet he was extremely disgusted at the inconsistency of some of the Revolutionists and condemned their selfishness. "Mister Yorke, (for a culprit in a black silk coat does not appear to deserve the title of citizen)"²⁹ was one of the worst offenders. Upon his arrest in 1795 he sent out a popular appeal for funds to aid in his defense, preferring to keep his own fortune intact. This form of mendicancy Ritson especially abominated, and he was delighted that Yorke was sentenced to a fine and imprisonment in spite of all his trouble.³⁰

The dissatisfaction with the republican leaders registered in these comments of Ritson soon ripened into thorough disgust. He considered them not only inconsistent but insincere. "To confess the truth", he said, "the more I see of these modern patriots and philosophers the less I like them." Holcroft and Godwin fell under his particular censure: the former for his over-weening egotism; the latter for the want of courage to face the full consequences of the practical application of his philosophy. Holcroft regretted keenly that he had not been allowed to display his oratorical talents at his trial and declared that he would gladly have given one of his hands for the opportunity of making his own defense; "which", Ritson remarked, "would certainly have hanged him, however favorable his judges might have been beforehand."³¹ Godwin was ridiculed for recognizing the authority of an institution which he professed to hold in contempt by having his marriage with Mary Wollstonecraft sanctioned by the ceremonies of the Church of England.³² Ritson's quarrel with Godwin over the loan of books and money no doubt intensified his bitterness. On January 16, 1801, he wrote to the philosopher: "I wish you would make it convenient to return me the thirty pounds I lent you." Godwin was unable to repay the money, but he sent a copy of his tragedy, which he hoped would please Ritson. The critic replied in surly tones:

"Though you have not ability to repay the money I lent, you might have integrity enough to return the books you borrowed. . . . I never received a copy of your unfortunate tragedy: nor, from the fate it experienced, and the character I have read and heard of it, can I profess myself very anxious for its perusal."

But the unctuous Godwin was not in the least disturbed by the consequences of Ritson's "transient misapprehension", and by repaying a

²⁹*Ibid.*, II, p. 96.

³⁰Howell, *Op. Cit.*, Vol. XXV, p. 1154.

³¹*Letters*, II, p. 63.

³²*Ibid.*, II, p. 154.

few pounds of the loan, and by the discreet employment of flattery succeeded in drawing from him a half-hearted apology.³³

But even though Ritson became disgusted with the methods employed by the Revolutionary leaders in England, he continued until near his death to hope for a transplanting of the French spirit to his own country. Upon his return from France he was anxious that the English people should enjoy a degree of freedom equal to that of the French. This end could be gained only by a revolution, and he thought the upheaval would be sudden and violent. The work of the Corresponding Societies and of the republican orators had its effect, but he looked to dissatisfaction with economic conditions for the real source of a popular uprising. In 1793 he wrote:

"With respect to a revolution, though I think it at no great distance, it seems to defy all calculations for the present. If the increase of taxes, the decline of manufacture, the high price of provisions, and the like, have no effect upon the apathy of the sans culottes here, one can expect little from the reasoning of philosophers or politicians. When the pot boils violently, however, it is not always in the Cook's power to prevent some of the fat from falling into the fire."³⁴

He continued for some time to hope that the English people would work out their own salvation, but with the progress of hostilities between the French republic and Holland, and between England and Spain, he looked forward to a French invasion which would establish the ideal government on the island. Everything, he said, was to be hoped from the success of the French in Holland, nothing without it. After nearly a decade of waiting, in "momentary expectation of the French fleet", he abandoned hope of any great assistance from the continent. The republicans were already proving themselves unworthy of the high confidence he had placed in them, and with the change of the English ministry in 1801 he prayed for a "settled and permanent peace".³⁵

It has been stated in Chambers's *Book of Days*³⁶ and in the *Dictionary of National Biography* that Ritson's admiration for the heroes of the French Revolution led him to adopt their atheistic religious views. But it is apparent from a survey of his letters and publications that, while his visit to France and his subsequent interest in the leaders of the Revolution undoubtedly intensified his animosity to orthodox religion, they were not the source of it. From the time of his earliest book, which appeared nine years before his foreign visit, he was outspoken in condemnation of the Bible, the church, and all religious sects. There is no

³³C. K. Paul, *Op. Cit.*, II, p. 61 ff.

³⁴*Letters*, II, pp. 23, 42.

³⁵*Ibid.*, II, pp. 63, 128, 182, 205.

³⁶Vol. II, p. 406.

evidence of religious training in his early life, and he seems to have brought to his work a deep-seated aversion to all organized faiths. In his prefatory dissertations he made frequent and always disparaging allusions to the historical importance of Christianity. It was his declared opinion that the christianizing of the Saxons was their undoing, and he dated the "perversion of true history" from the time when it began to be written by monks, and the "disgrace of English literature" from the age in which the legends of the Christian saints were believed and promulgated.

"While the Saxons continued pagans", he writes, "they were unquestionably a brave and warlike nation; but upon their conversion to Christianity their kings became monks, the people cowards and slaves, unable to defend themselves, and a prey to every invader."³⁷

Elsewhere he asked what advantages the Saxons had gained, how much their understanding had been enlightened, or how much their morals had been improved, to counterbalance the destruction of their national genius and spirit as a result of their accepting the Christian faith.³⁸ According to his theory the origin of romance was to be sought

"in the different systems of superstition which have from time to time prevailed, whether pagan or Christian. The gods of the ancient heathens and the saints of the more modern Christians, are the same sort of imaginary beings who alternately give existence to romances, and receive it from them. The legends of the one and the fables of the other, have been constantly fabricated for the same purpose, and with the same view—the promotion of fanaticism, which, being mere illusion, can only be excited or supported by romance. . . . There is this distinction indeed, between the heathen deities and the Christian saints, that the fables of the former were indebted for their existence to the flowery imagination of the sublime poet, and the legends of the latter to the gloomy fanaticism of a lazy monk or stinking priest."³⁹

Closely enwrapped in this scorn for the historical prestige of the church was a contemptuous disrespect for its ministers, both medieval and modern. "A piper", he exclaimed, "is preferable to a parson".⁴⁰ He thought it because of the "malicious endeavors of pitiful monks, by whom history was consecrated to the crimes and follies of titled ruffians and sainted idiots", that the "patriotic exertions and virtuous acts" of

³⁷*Metrical Romances*, I, p. 33.

³⁸*English Songs*, I, pp. xlvii, lviii, etc. In one of the cancelled passages in *Metrical Romances*, he declared the Saxons would have been better off if they had never had a Bible to read. See Appendix B.

³⁹*Met. Roms.*, I, p. 19.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, I, p. 109.

Robin Hood had not been recorded for the edification of posterity.⁴¹ But the crimes of the early churchmen were not merely negative. In the distorted vision of this hypochondriac critic they had fathered upon English history and literature an incubus from which they had struggled in vain to free themselves. He writes:

"The forgery and fabrication of lying legends, of James the son of Zebedee, Simon Zealot, Simon Peter and Saint Paul . . . and many more such nonentities, all forgery and falsehood, have been greedily swallowed up . . . to the pollution of true history and the everlasting disgrace of English literature."⁴²

With the churchmen of his own day he was no less unreasonable. If his indefensible violence towards Percy and Warton was not intensified by their connection with the church, at least his sneering allusions to their ecclesiastical position would make such a deduction almost inevitable.⁴³ He took no pains to save their moral feelings but seemed rather to embrace every opportunity to expose what he considered an inconsistency between their religious profession and their literary practice.⁴⁴

For the church as an historical institution Ritson professed no respect, and he had only jeers for the various religious sects. He spoke with fluency of "Calvanistic bigotry",⁴⁵ of the "fanatical puritans", and of "those modern puritans, the methodists".⁴⁶ Concerning his nephew's early training he wrote to Wadeson:

"I know not whence you collect any intention in me of making him a papist, unless you suppose that papacy and fiddling necessarily go together. I shall rely on your care in preventing his mother's making a methodist of him: but must insist that you do not attempt to make him a presbyterian, which, if there be any difference in such sectarists, is the worst among them."⁴⁷

He thought his sister's long illness was only a religious melancholy and severely reprimanded his nephew for joining the "gang of methodists" who intensified her complaint by singing and praying.⁴⁸ It was his earnest wish that there should be no singing of hymns at his sister's funeral and no clergyman present at his own burial.

⁴¹*Robin Hood*, I, pp. xv, viv.

⁴²*King Arthur*, p. 126.

⁴³This was the point of view taken by his contemporaries and emphasized in all the *Reviews*. Percy laid much stress on this point in correspondence concerning Ritson.

⁴⁴His satirization of the religious comments of Johnson and Steevens will be recalled in this connection.

⁴⁵*Ancient Songs*, I, p. xxvii.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, I, p. lxxviii; *Scotish Songs*, I, p. cii; *Letters*, I, p. 100.

⁴⁷*Letters*, I, p. 24.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, I, p. 101.

After such an array of testimony concerning Ritson's position with regard to the church and churchmen, there can be little question as to his personal beliefs. Although there appears nowhere in his published works or in the extant correspondence an explicit statement on the point, he owned no belief in a supreme being and was undoubtedly an atheist. Robert Smith, who was perhaps as intimate with Ritson as any member of the Inn, declared that he did not think him an atheist. But his reasoning is by no means convincing. If he were an atheist, he said, "why should he send up ejaculations to God, or talk of the Devil tormenting people whom he believed had used him very ill?"⁴⁹ Ritson, himself, would have called these expressions simply foolish and unmeaning oaths which were neither wicked nor criminal.⁵⁰ On the other hand, Mrs. Kirby, who had known Ritson from his youth up, said he certainly was an atheist, for he had often declared himself such to her.

"He did not believe there was any such being as Almighty God, or that there was any future state of rewards or punishment, and the greatest devil he knew was a nasty, crabbed, ill-natured old woman."⁵¹

This statement, in itself, is not, of course, conclusive evidence of Ritson's atheism, but it fits in perfectly with the general character of his remarks on religion and with the opinion held by him by his contemporaries.⁵²

On the question of belief in a future state Ritson was more specific. In the first year of the nineteenth century he wrote to his "worthy, venerable, and very dear friend," Harrison, congratulating him on his long life, and in that letter remarked:

"You know my sentiments with regard to other worlds, which I believe, are not likely to change. My health is much impaired, my frame disordered, and my spirits depressed; so that I have no hopes for myself of an eternal existence; and am rather, in fact, disposed to wonder that I have lived so long; having had the mortification to see many whom I loved and esteemed drop from time to time around me at a much more immature age."⁵³

Although he could at times write in this calm and dispassionate manner,

⁴⁹Appendix A.

⁵⁰See Appendix B.

⁵¹Appendix A. Mrs. Kirby likewise maintained that Ritson played the hypocrite in taking the oaths of allegiance, supremacy, and abjuration on his admission to the bar. If he thought of the significance of these oaths at all, Ritson probably considered them as a mere form to be gone through with in order to reach his goal.

⁵²See the reviews of any of the publications which contain essays. Haslewood, *Op. Cit.*, p. 3, note, states that a letter was written to a person then living (1824) declaring his poignant regret, even to tearfulness, that it had been his misfortune to live an unbeliever.

⁵³*Letters*, II, p. 205.

there were occasions when he viewed life, and perhaps death, less steadily. His illness resulted, at the end of his life, in frequent mental aberrations. In these last days he devoted his energy to an attempt to prove Christ an impostor. This pamphlet was never finished. It was laid aside a short time before he was permanently bereft of reason, and the sheets already written were destroyed in the flames. The religiously inclined of his own day believed that remorse had seized him and that by the hand of Providence he was arrested in this final sacreligious undertaking.⁵⁴

A consideration of Ritson's destructive comments affords an accurate but not an adequate view of his principles: accurate because it reveals his attitude toward religious affairs; inadequate because it does not include his ethical creed. He was a man of uncompromising moral integrity. His insistence on fidelity and honesty in editorial labors is well known. To deceive, to simulate, to shirk one's duty, was to incur his wrath. And this had to do not only with literary matters; he held the same standards for every activity of life. In his letters of counsel to his nephew he emphasized right and honest action. On one occasion he wrote to Frank, then a mere boy:

"Never hesitate between a beggar and a half-penny worth of nuts. I know not whether by adopting this maxim you may (as the Scripture says) 'lay up treasures in heaven', but this I am sure of, that the relish of a good action will continue longer and be a thousand times more grateful than that of an apple."⁵⁵

From the very first his philosophy was grounded on humanitarian principles. After enumerating various inhuman practises, he admonishes his youthful nephew thus:

"All these you ought to detest and abhor; and, by following the contrary and opposite paths of Reason and Virture, you will obtain, or what is the same thing, deserve the love and esteem of everyone who knows you; and if they do not make you a great man, they will at least make you a good one which is a much superior, and far more excellent character."⁵⁶

Reason and virtue are not clearly defined, but Ritson's test of the reasonableness of an act, and so of its rightness or wrongness, was its utility. "What is *right* or *wrong* but that which is *useful* or *pernicious*?" he asks late in life; "is there any other criterion?"⁵⁷ His

⁵⁴See Selby's letters, Appendix A.

⁵⁵*Letters*, I, p. 64.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, I, p. 21.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, II, p. 90.

acceptance of Reason⁵⁸ as the guide of conduct allied him with the Revolutionary leaders and cut him off effectually from the disciples of revealed religion. With undoubted sincerity he lived the present life according to what he considered the most exalted standards, and if, with this, he had not the consolation of a future existence, he deserves rather the commiseration than the condemnation and ridicule of those who consider themselves more fortunate.

The new enthusiasm engendered by Ritson's visit to Paris operated to revive his waning interest in orthographical reform. In his early publications, especially the *Versees*, *English Songs*, and the Shakespeare pamphlets, he had undertaken to reform the English language by systematizing its spelling. The full extent of his system is not known. As far as he developed it, it consisted in discarding the capital I when not at the beginning of a sentence and in giving all words ending in e their full form when suffixes were added. These attempts at so-called reform met with so little encouragement and so much ridicule that Ritson was discouraged from pushing the matter further. In the last Shakespeare pamphlet (1790) he said that although his system of spelling required further elucidation he had no inclination to continue it. At the end of the year he gave Walker a further reason for abandoning his efforts in this direction:

"I was much pleased to find you had had the resolution to discard the capital I from the middle of a sentence. Nothing can be urged in its favor but the ordinary argument of prejudice against improvement, that it is an innovation. I have sometimes attempted little reforms of this nature, but I find a spirit of ignorance and bigotry so universally prevalent, that I have been compelled as it were to abandon every idea of the sort, though I shall always applaud the man who has courage enough to pluck the Blatant Beast by the beard."⁵⁹

In the fall of the next year he visited France and returned to England with sufficient courage to beard the lion in his own den, which he did by flaunting innovations of spelling in all his subsequent publications. The first letter written after his return to London, the exuberant republicanism of which has already been noted, was crowded full of strange spellings. After the second sentence he remarked parenthetically: "You observe, by the way, i am teaching you how to spell". And at the end of the letter he invited criticism with the confidence of one whose position is unassailable: "if you know any cause or just impediment why words should not be spelled in my way you are to declare it". Yet with all

⁵⁸There is no external evidence of Ritson's indebtedness to either Bentham or Hume. He might have got his philosophy from them or from any of the Revolutionary leaders; the doctrine was sufficiently current.

⁵⁹*Letters*, I, p. 177.

his new enthusiasm, Ritson professed not to be an advocate of innovation merely because it was innovation. Joseph Frank carried his uncle's general scheme of reform further than Ritson was willing to go. He wished to abolish the capital letter at the beginning of a line of poetry when not also the beginning of a sentence⁶⁰ and to substitute "thou" for "you" in familiar address. Ritson answered that there was no sufficient reason for abolishing fixed and universal customs in language unless it could be proved that the benefit accruing from the change would considerably overbalance the confusion resulting from such an innovation,—and this, he said, could not be demonstrated in these two cases. "Until convinced to the contrary, I am entitled to maintain that the practise is right, merely in short, because it is a practise. Never wake a sleeping lion."⁶¹

But Ritson did not follow his own excellent advice. Although the use of "himself", "themselves", etc., had become established, he prepared a dissertation purporting to prove that "self is always a substantive; as in 'myself', 'thyself', etc., and, consequently 'himself' is anomalous and absurd."⁶² The process of dropping the *k* from words ending in *-ck* had become quite noticeable by this time.⁶³ But for the sake of consistency Ritson wished to restore it. His reason is thus stated:

"It appears that as many words still continue to end in *-ck* as have been made to end in *-c*; and, as the privation cannot possibly be applied to the former list, I conclude it will be the best method not to apply it to the latter. There may be some exceptions, as no rule is without them: but your question should have been not why the *k* is to be preserved in such and such words, but why it came to be rejected from them."⁶⁴

To revise English orthography and grammar with a view to absolute consistency would be a gigantic task, impossible for any single man to accomplish and equally impossible for any body of men unless clothed with unlimited authority. Left to its natural course language develops irregularly and often illogically, and this too, in spite of the efforts of reformers and systematizers.

Ritson worked with his system of spelling and grammar for many

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, II, p. 39. This innovation Capell had employed in his *Prolusions*, 1760, only to meet with universal ridicule and contempt.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, II, pp. 85, 89, 96.

⁶²*Ibid.*, II, p. 144.

⁶³John Walker's *Rhyming Dictionary*, London, 1775, gives a list of several hundred words in *-ck*, and another of practically equal length from which the *k* has been dropped.

⁶⁴*Letters*, II, p. 106.

years, yet he never came to the point of absolute certainty on all its phases. In 1795 he wrote:

"I have scarcely courage enough to apply my principles of orthography to the verb and participle in *-en*: not knowing well what to do with the words given, driven, riven, etc., etc. However, I take ripeen, hasteen, spoken, etc., to be perfectly accurate."⁶⁵

But uncertainty on particular points did not deter him from employing many innovations of his system in his published works. Each volume was more forbidding in appearance than its predecessor, and after his return from France the promiscuous use of mutilated forms rendered much of his text obsolete and well nigh unintelligible. It was often necessary for him to modify his spelling as well as his religious sentiments in order to secure a publisher, and the editors of all his posthumous publications found it necessary to "reduce his orthography to the recognized standard of our language". There is no reason to believe, as these editors have stated, that Ritson would have modernized the spelling himself if he had lived to see the books through the press.⁶⁶ Under wholly different circumstances this might have been possible. But as illness with its consequent insanity settled down upon him he became more eccentric in every way and more violently aggressive in exhibiting his idiosyncrasies.

From his own day to ours Ritson's orthography has been made the butt of numerous critics. A factitious letter in the *Monthly Mirror* for August, 1803, put together by "Old Nick", ludicrously exposed some of his variations from the common rules of spelling. Subsequent writers declare that his orthography was based on no conception of the relations of words but was the caprice of fancy and the sport of a crank.⁶⁷ That it was, especially in his later years, largely the result of fancy and caprice there can be no doubt. But it is equally true that it had its inception and its early nurture in what he himself erroneously believed to be the accurate rules of historical grammar. His fault was in not realizing the essentially plastic nature of language and its consequent instability, so that the rules of Shakespeare's time, even though they could be with absolute certainty determined, would not apply to our own. Ritson published nothing to compare with Elphinston's *Propriety ascertained in her picture, or English Speech and Spelling mutual guides*,

⁶⁵*Ibid.*

⁶⁶See Prefaces to the various posthumous publications. Joseph Frank's patent efforts to exculpate his uncle explain many of these assertions.

⁶⁷See especially, Haslewood, *Op. Cit.*, p. 29; H. A. Beers, *English Romanticism in the eighteenth century*, p. 297; De Quincey's *Works*, Vol. XI, p. 441. For contemporary remarks see the reviews of any of his books.

and his *Inglish Orthoggraphy epittomized, and Propriety's pocket-diccionary*; but the three treatises which he did prepare no doubt embodied his grammatical and orthographical systems. If these should be recovered to supplement the scattered remarks already known, it could be determined whether Ritson stood on solid historical ground. Without them he is only to be classed with Capell, Elphinston, Pinkerton, Landor, and others of the large body of "orthographic mutineers" whose peculiar eccentricities have served mainly to amuse the public.

We have already seen the origin of Ritson's vegetarianism in the reading, at nineteen years of age, of Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees*. By his own statement he was induced, only after serious reflection, to take up this mode of life, and throughout his remaining years he adhered to it in the face of scorn, ridicule, and volent abuse. There is a very reasonable doubt as to whether this habit of diet was a mere fad, as it has been continually called. Even though his reasons for abjuring animal food were purely personal, yet they were founded on what he believed to be the unshakable rock of Reason and Virtue. He was fundamentally and sincerely humanitarian in nature, feeling deeply for all the lower forms of life and repeatedly declaring that animals had as much right to the full enjoyments of life as man himself. In limiting his diet to vegetable food he felt that he was not only conserving life but that he was contributing to his own happiness by freeing his conscience from the accusation of murder. He was anxious that others should enjoy the mental tranquility which he maintained always accompanied abstinence from animal food, and so he sought to make proselytes. His young nephew was not unnaturally his first convert. In the letters to him, along with an exaggerated idea of the importance of his pet hobby, Ritson propounded much sound advice and good common sense.

His earliest counsel to Frank was primarily humanitarian. In 1781 he wrote:

"Cruelty and barbarity or wantonness to brute animals, birds, insects, or any other living thing which you might have power over; not forgetting the inhuman custom of taking birds' nests, eggs, etc., which is abominable: all this you ought to detest and abhor."⁶⁸

A few months later he said: "humanity and good nature are the first and highest virtues that the mind of man is capable of entertaining."⁶⁹ Within a year from this time he had, by force of reason and the offer of a small monthly stipend, persuaded Frank of the virtue of eating no meat. He praised his nephew for persisting "so heroically in a mode

⁶⁸*Letters*, I, p. 21.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, I, p. 29.

of living, which you will one day or other find to have been of essential service both to your body and mind, by preserving health and a good conscience, neither of which you could possibly have if you addicted yourself to the unnatural and diabolical practise of devouring your fellow creatures, as pigs and geese undoubtedly are."⁷⁰ This is the strain in which his comments always run. With the single-mindedness of the fanatic, he did not appreciate the absurdity of his theories when pushed to extremes. It was apparently easy for him to declare, for he said it more than once, and no doubt came firmly to believe it, that no one who ate animal food could have a sound mind, a strong body, or a clear conscience. The result in his own case gave eloquent testimony to the fallacy of his reasoning.

Frank was a willing and enthusiastic disciple and appealed to his uncle in doubtful cases. After eggs had been added to the list of contraband, he asked if it was improper to eat a pudding which contained eggs. Ritson replied, drawing a very nice distinction:

"I think that if a pudding stand before you, you are not obliged to refuse it on account of the eggs. I do not myself. But I should never *direct* a pudding to be made for me with eggs in it."⁷¹

With boyish enthusiasm Frank carried into practice the humanitarian principles which he had learned, and on one occasion, at least, Ritson was obliged to write to his sister a mild protest on the unforeseen results of his teaching:

"I rather think Joe went a little too far in putting Mrs. Wiseman's cat to death for killing a mouse, which, perhaps nature, certainly education had taught her to look upon as a duty."⁷²

Ritson's sister was his second and last known convert to vegetarianism. In her case, as in his own, the results were unfortunate and all but fatal. His tender solicitation on the occasion of her illness reveals the affection and compassion of the nature which lay back of his eccentric and uninviting manner. Following his suggestion she had limited herself to a vegetable diet, but the sudden change of a life-long habit so impaired her strength that she was reduced to serious illness, and the judicious use of wines and meats was prescribed as the only means of restoring her to health. In deference to her brother she re-

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, I, p. 39.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, I, p. 41.

⁷²*Ibid.*, I, p. 95. There is no support for Mrs. Kirby's assertion that Ritson drove Frank out of chambers because he ate animal food. The correspondence of uncle and nephew is continuous and gives no hint of a misunderstanding on this point.

fused to comply with these instructions. Learning of the serious consequences of his teaching, Ritson hastened to inform her that he had never meant his words to be taken so literally nor followed to such extremes.

"I hardly wished and never expected", he wrote apologetically, "that my scruples on this head would influence you so far as to make you give up the mode of living to which you have always been accustomed. Certainly not that you would resolve to deny yourself what everybody about you, nay, even almost the whole world, eats without concern or reflection, when your very existence might perhaps depend upon it. I shall not weary you with further argument. I only hope and desire that as you relinquished the use of this food out of complaisance to me as a philosopher, you will now revive it out of affection for me as a brother."⁷³

Ritson made no secret of his aversion to animal food; it was one of the things that everybody knew about him. His unpleasant encounter with Leyden at Lasswade cottage grew out of an argument on the eating of meat. He frequently dropped into letters to close friends arguments aimed to persuade them to desist from animal food. Wadson played a practical joke on him by pretending to be almost persuaded never to taste another morsel of meat, when in reality he was gormandizing all the while. When Ritson discovered the deception, he expostulated in mock seriousness, concluding thus:

"But, alas! miracles will never cease!—and god knows whether I myself, who am thus preaching to you, and set such an example of temperance and humanity to all, may not be found one day or other devouring lambs and turkeys, geese and capons, and all other creatures which earth, air, or sea, can furnish, and the luxury of the most voluptuous epicures have for these thousand years past been day by day singling out for the beastly satisfaction of their unnatural appetites."⁷⁴

This is excellent sarcasm. So long as an individual can treat of his own personal foibles and eccentricities in this fashion he is on the safe side of the dividing line between sanity and lunacy. But it is comparatively easy for peculiarities of thought and manner to be so exaggerated as to lead almost insensibly into insanity. Unfortunately this was the trend of Ritson's crotchets. Their final summation in *An Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food as a Moral Duty*, 1802, contains many evidences of insanity. The ear-marks of idiosyncrasy were so numerous on this manuscript that Ritson did not readily find a publisher for it. It was at length accepted at the Jacobinical shop

⁷³*Ibid.*, I, p. 49.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, I, p. 32.

of Richard Phillips,⁷⁵ a kindred spirit and himself a Pythagorean. Ritson expressed his gratitude to Phillips by a complimentary allusion to the abstemiousness of his publisher.⁷⁶

In this Essay Ritson played his usual rôle of compiler. He listed a large number of extracts from various sources and then arranged them with a view to illustrate the propriety of abstinence from animal food. Of the ten chapters in the book the first, "Of Man", and the last, "Humanity", stand somewhat in the relation of prologue and epilogue to the body of the work. In the prologue Ritson relates the various accounts of the origin of man, from Homer to the "sensible and eloquent Rousseau", omitting the Biblical account. The original man was the same as, if not identical with, the orang-outang.⁷⁷ Through the centuries of so-called civilization he had retained the destructive traits of his forbears and had even excelled them in rapacity and cruelty. The dog is the natural enemy to the cat, the cat to the rat, the fox to the goose, the ferret to the rabbit, the spider to the fly; the whole animal creation being a system for the express purpose of preying upon each other, and for their mutual misery and destruction. Man stands at the head of this great system of cruelty and ferocity, whereas, by the very fact that he is man he ought to be superior to these purely animal characteristics.

"The only mode in which man can be useful or happy, with respect either to the generality or to the individual, is to be just, mild, merciful, benevolent, humane. or, at least, innocent and harmless, whether such qualities be natural or not; but if the present system of bloodshed, cruelty, malignance, and mischief, should continue, it would be better that such diabolical monsters should cease to exist."⁷⁸

By this high-sounding arraignment of the sins of man Ritson means simply to condemn his habit of eating animal food—this is the root of all evil. It is the cause of cruelty and ferocity, of human sacrifices,

⁷⁵Richard Phillips (1767-1840) was a radical whose shop became headquarters for the advanced democratic literature of the revolutionary epoch. His *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy*, 1826, contains "The Author's reasons for not eating animal food".

⁷⁶*Abstinence from Animal Food*, p. 201.

⁷⁷In foreshadowing the later theory of the origin of man and his ascent or descent from the lower forms, Ritson has been anticipated by James Burnett, Lord Monboddo, (1714-1799) in his six volume work *On the Origin and Progress of Language*, 1773-92. (See also Knight, *Lord Monboddo and some of his contemporaries*, 1900). It seems hardly probable that Ritson did not know this publication, although he makes no allusion to it. He quotes frequently from *The Philosophy of Natural History*, 1780-9, of Burnett's friend, William Smellie.

⁷⁸*Abstinence from Animal Food*, p. 38 ff.

and of cannibalism, to each of which he devotes a chapter. Besides, animal food is not natural to man. There are flesh-eating animals to be sure, but these, Ritson says, are the extremely vicious, and they possess these reprehensible traits as a result of their carnivorous appetites, not as the cause of them. Man, being naturally a more gentle animal, has corrupted and vitiated himself by indulgence in flesh and has consequently taken on the attributes of the worst animals. But Ritson feels that his arguments of the evil consequences of animal food will not be sufficient to effect a reform, because people have come to believe, or to pretend that they believe, animal food necessary to the highest bodily and intellectual vigor. And so he devotes a chapter to proving "animal food not necessary for the purpose of strength and corpulency". His method is the eclectic one of citing cases of vegetarians who were notably strong and healthy. But this is only one-half the picture; animal food is declared to be positively pernicious and to destroy health, spirits, and quickness of perception. From a number of cases in which intractable diseases were cured by a vegetable diet—and these examples could no doubt then, and certainly could now, be multiplied almost indefinitely—Ritson inferred that animal food was the cause of the ailment and that a vegetarian diet would have prevented it. It did not occur to him that it was not the use of animal food but the improper use of any food (as many of his medical authorities expressly stated⁷⁹) which was to be censured. Nor did he experience difficulty in generalizing from individuals to nations subsisting entirely on vegetable food. Reduced to their logical absurdity, his arguments would deny health and peace of mind to those individuals, and prosperity and advancement to those nations, that indulged in animal food. This volume is the final outcome of his early advice to Frank on the morality of abstinence, but the condition of his mind or his own willfulness had prevented his seeing the absurdity of his conclusions. He constantly harks back to the sacredness of every form of animal life, and the epilogue to this erratic volume is very properly "Humanity". "If god made man", he concludes, "or there be any *intention* in nature", the lives of the animals over which he considers himself master, "are equally sacred and inviolable with his own".

Ritson's vegetarian diet had long been the butt of numerous quips and much sarcastic comment. A verse lampoon in the *St. James's Chronicle* of June 3, 1783, reveals the extent to which his dietetical eccentricity had gained publicity at that time. A contrast is drawn between his great compassion for the lower forms of animal life and his utter lack of sympathy with other men, especially in matters liter-

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, p. 148 ff.

ary.⁸⁰ It is said that Holcroft probably intended the simple and amusing character of Handford, in his *Alwyn, or the Gentleman Comedian*, as an indirect satire upon Ritson's arguments on the inhumanity of eating animal food.⁸¹ With the publication of Ritson's *Essay* comments came as thick as hail. Cutlet, an emotional butcher in Lamb's *The Pawnbroker's Daughter*, is made to sentimentalize in a highly ludicrous fashion over *Animal Food*.⁸² The reviewers greeted the volume with shouts of laughter and hoots of derision,⁸³ and numerous comments appeared in the letters of literary men of the day.⁸⁴ Ritson had clearly failed in his object, whether it was simply to justify his own habit of life or to do this and to gain proselytes to it. Marks of incipient insanity are on every hand, and they can be explained only by the deranged mind and body whose strength, perhaps, had been in large measure undermined by the very habit he sought to defend.

Ritson was never physically robust. There can be little doubt that his ill health had its origin in a constitutional or hereditary malady, and it was certainly aggravated by his diet. If, as he suspected, he was afflicted by "an inveterate scurvy", nothing could have been more suicidal than limitation to a restricted diet through many years. By 1790 he began to suffer constantly from nervousness, insomnia, and inanition. His malady grew constantly more distressing until his liter-

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THE PYTHAGOREAN CRITICK.

By wise Pythagoras taught young R-ts-n's meals
 With bloody viands never are defil'd;
 For Quadruped, for Bird, for Fish he feels:
 His board ne'er smokes with roast meat, nor with boil'd.
 In this one instance, pious, mild, and tame,
 He's surely in another a great sinner;
 For Man, cries R-ts-n, Man's my game!
 On him I make a most delicious dinner.
 To venison and to partridge I've no Gout;
 To W-rt-n Tom such dainties I resign;
 Give me plump St-v-ns, and large J-hns-n too,
 And take your turkey and your savory chine.

⁸¹See Holcroft's *Memoirs*, pp. 112-3.

⁸²*The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols., London, 1903, Vol. V, p. 212 ff.

⁸³See *Critical Review*, Vol. XXXVIII, pp. 16-7; *Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. LXXIII, ii, p. 95; *Monthly Review*, Vol. CXXIII, pp. 40-5; *Edinburg Review*, Vol. II, pp. 128-36; *British Chitac*, November, 1803.

⁸⁴See Nichols, *Lit. Anec.*, VII, p. 604; VIII, p. 50; *Constable and his Lit. Correspond.*, I, p. 503; *Memoirs, journal and correspondence of Thomas Moore*, ed. by J. Russell, 8 vols., London, 1853-6, Vol. VII, p. 13.

ary labors all but ceased. In January, 1802, he suffered a stroke of apoplexy and during the twenty-four hours in which he was deprived of all mental and physical faculties, was thought to be dying. Apropos of this event he remarked stoically: "The next attack, I suppose will carry me off".⁸⁵ In the spring of this year when he was planning a second trip to Paris, he was visited by another attack, and when partially recovered from it he went to Bath for a month. There he received only slight alleviation because he was too impatient to remain long enough for effective relief. He promised to return the next season, but his physician warned him that he would not live to see that time.⁸⁶

To bodily illness was added pecuniary distress. It was at this time that his ill-advised speculation in the Stock Exchange utterly ruined him. To retrieve in a measure his lost fortune, he disposed of his remaining property in the North and with great reluctance sold a few of his books.⁸⁷ The following summer he was obliged to part with two other sections of his library.⁸⁸ Realizing that the end was near, he shrewdly determined upon insuring his life for £1000, as his friend Reed had done only a short time before death. He had proceeded favorably in his design with the Equitable Assurance Company when the directors learned of his recent illness and declined the business. Upon receipt of this news, Ritson says, "I turned my back and came away as cool as a cucumber".⁸⁹

Early in September Ritson became violent, barricaded himself in his chambers, and drove off in a threatening manner all who approached him. He disturbed the members of the Inn by loud boasting of his accomplishments in confuting literary leaders, and by setting fire to a mass of papers which included many unfinished manuscripts. Only one person had influence with him in these paroxysms. This was Robert Smith, a fellow Inn-man, who cared for him until Joseph Frank arrived from the North.⁹⁰ Ritson was then removed to the country house of Sir Jonathan Miles at Hoxton, where he was attended by Dr. Temple of Bedford-Row. There he died at four o'clock in the morning, September 23, 1803. Four days later he was buried without ceremony of any kind and with the attendance of but a few personal friends, near the

⁸⁵*Letters*, II, p. 215.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, II, p. 229.

⁸⁷This was in a miscellaneous sale at King's, and the exact date is unknown.

⁸⁸May 4-10, 1803: an anonymous sale by Leigh and Sotheby, described as "the property of a well-known collector, consisting of English history, old English poetry, plays, etc."; and August 10, a further part at King's in the third day of the sale of Dr. Mitchell's books.

⁸⁹*Letters*, II, p. 245.

⁹⁰See his account of Ritson's last days. Appendix A.

grave of his friend John Baynes, in Bunhill Fields. Frank was immediately appointed administrator. He found that his uncle's debts ran very high and that there was no property but the library. He accordingly arranged for the sale of Ritson's books. The law books were disposed of by Leigh and Sotheby, in November.⁹¹ The remainder of his library, including many rare books of medieval history and poetry, several of them plentifully supplied with his own notes, and what manuscripts had escaped the conflagration, was disposed of in the early days of December.⁹² In addition to the proceeds from these sales Frank found it necessary to supply £500 from his own funds in order to liquidate his uncle's indebtedness.

Ritson's will, which had been executed on September 7, was not discovered for several days after his death. His nephew knew Ritson's wishes so well that all the directions contained in the will, except the last, were carried out before it was known they had been made. The last clause of the will reads:

"With respect to my funeral, (if I happen to die, that is, in the county of Middlesex, or the city of London), my most earnest request to my executor is, that my body may be interred in the burying ground of Burnhill fields, with the least possible ceremony, attendance, or expense, without the presence of a clergyman, and my coffin being previously, carefully and effectually filled with quick lime."⁹³

One of Ritson's contemporaries remarked that he slipped away unnoticed, and his grave has been unnoticed since. No stone marks his resting place in Bunhill fields. There is a tradition that he desired to be forgotten by the world and to that end directed that his grave be immediately levelled and left to the care of nature,⁹⁴ but its only authentic support is the rather meagre evidence afforded by the following quotation from one of his letters to Thomas Hill, in which he declines an invitation to have his picture appear in the *Monthly Mirror*:

"Here, let me live, unseen, unknown,
Here, unlamented, let me dye,
Steal from the world, and ne'er a stone
Tel where i lye."⁹⁵

⁹¹With the books of John Topham, Treasurer of the Society of Antiquaries.

⁹²These sales were well attended by publishers and antiquaries. See letters of Park and Hill, Add. MSS. 20083, ff. 98, 109, 122, etc.

⁹³Quoted from Nicolas, Op. Cit., p. lxxv.

⁹⁴See E. Field, Love affairs of a Bibliomaniac, p. 93.

⁹⁵N. and Q., Ser. 2, Vol. XII, p. 222.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

Joseph Ritson was a man of little formal education but of much learning. If the terminology of the modern business world may be transferred to the intellectual sphere, he would be called a self-made man. His schooling was brief, being limited to the grammar forms. The child of poverty, he was put to a profession when young. But he was a foster-child of the muses, and instead of confining his attention to the book of common law and the statutes, he read widely and voraciously in history and medieval poetry. He read carefully and with insight and made notes in many of his books.¹ As the need for extending his knowledge of his own and foreign languages became apparent, he took up their study in a systematic and thorough-going fashion. He became proficient in Middle English and gained a familiarity with Anglo-Saxon at a time when the study of these dialects was just beginning. The thoroughness and accuracy of the extensive glossaries supplied with his collections of medieval poetry are sufficient testimony to his skill in this field. He acquired a working knowledge of Latin and French and strewed his essays with apt quotations from writers in these tongues. It is not improbable that he attained sufficient familiarity with Italian and Spanish to enable him to lay under contribution historical works in these languages, for he frequently alludes to and occasionally quotes from such sources. Greek he did not know beyond the letters of the alphabet. Nor was he proficient in German, although the growing interest in German literature attracted his attention and through the purchases which he made for his friend Harrison he learned something of the new publications in that language. Although not a man of remarkably extensive linguistic knowledge, he was thorough and accurate as far as his information allowed. Above all he recognized the value of comparative study and applied his knowledge of foreign languages to elucidate the early English and Scottish dialects.

Ritson was a prodigious worker. In spite of a constitutional disease which troubled him almost continually and frequently made writing

¹From a calculation based on the Ritson sale catalogue, it appears that approximately half the volumes in his library were supplied with "MS. notes by Mr. Ritson, on separate sheets".

an impossibility, he prepared upwards of seventy volumes for the press and published half of them. These were nearly all collections of ancient poetry, songs, and ballads, and the collecting, verifying, annotating, and glossing was the painstaking labor of a life-time. He was able to work with great concentration and was aided by a wonderfully retentive memory which seldom failed him until illness had completely undermined his bodily strength and mental vigor.

In addition to his labor in collecting and publishing, Ritson was under the necessity of earning a livelihood. Only a few, and those the least expensive, of his publications paid for themselves. The profession of conveyancing to which he was bred was never of primary concern to him. He used it as a bread-and-butter profession only. But even so, his thoroughgoing habits and conscientious scruples caused him to master the subject in every detail and enabled him to publish some valuable antiquarian tracts on his office and the profession in general and gave him a respectable rank among the practitioners of his day.

Ritson's native field of labor was the Middle Ages. Half of his publications were collections of ballads, romances, and old songs. When his first collection appeared in 1783, the general interest in old poetry aroused by the *Reliques* had gained considerable headway. Volumes of ballads and ancient poems were appearing with a fair degree of regularity. Ritson joined the ranks of the literary gleaners and devoted a large part of the remaining years of his life to gathering up the scattered remnants of song and story which were dispersed in unknown or forgotten manuscripts or which held an uncertain tenure of life in the oral tradition of a people rapidly acquiring communication by the written word. In his efforts to rescue from oblivion and possible destruction these reliques of antiquity, he materially aided the romantic movement. If he was not a solitary forerunner of his age in recognizing the necessity for collecting popular poetry, his companions were very few. In the mere volume of the material which he amassed he exceeded any other man of his day. But it is not alone the matter which he collected, but the manner in which he handled it, that makes him the most important figure in ballad collecting between Percy and Scott.

It is always hazardous to attempt to designate any one man as the originator of a movement in literature. But in the sense of his being one of the first to practise editorial accuracy and the very first to insist upon it with such vehemence that others rectified their errors and confessedly stood in awe of his wrath, Ritson may be called the founder of the modern method of handling early English texts. He did not go the whole way to the present critical text, but he took the first and very essential step of insisting upon accuracy and fidelity to a single text.

He taught his generation to respect the literary remains of departed authors—instead of considering them as a legitimate plunder to be exploited, altered, and “improved” at will. In short, he taught men to speak the truth as they found it, even though the truth might be deemed offensive in the ear of a “cultivated age”. Detesting fraud and deception in the literary as in the business world, he would visit upon the one as condign a punishment as upon the other. In his admiration for truth he went to ridiculous extremes in carping and fault-finding, but no one can now doubt the value in his time of the line from Boileau which he took for the motto of his first publication,—a motto which represents his standard throughout all his editorial labors:

Rien n'est beau que LE VRAI; le vrai seul est amiable.

Without fidelity to sources and accuracy in transcribing in the early years of ballad collecting, many a “critical” text of today would have been an impossibility. Pinkerton and Percy might have gone on indefinitely publishing “ancient” poetry; meanwhile the *truly* ancient poetry would have become more and more remote and much of it must eventually have been irretrievably lost.

The antiquarian interest in old poetry was comparatively a recent development, and with it came a renewed curiosity in racial and national history. The English people began to inquire into the sources of their history and language and to attempt to establish their kinship with other nations. To the confused theories and faulty generalizations of the early investigators in this field Ritson applied his test of historical accuracy. He reduced the vagaries of Pinkerton to definite fact and assembled the historical materials from which accurate deductions could be made. In the revival of interest in local antiquities Ritson also had a share. He collected the songs of various northern localities, contributed to antiquarian histories, and made collections for his own history of Durham. But his service to antiquarianism in these various lines was not acknowledged. His unfortunate vein of acerbity, which manifested itself in nearly everything he wrote, aroused personal jealousies which barred him from membership in the Society of Antiquaries.

Ritson was for traveling the unbeaten paths. At a time when it had not yet become fashionable to be “different”, and in a day when the number of those who ran counter to the prevailing customs and ideas was relatively small, he was marked as a romanticist because of his Jacobinism and atheism, and because he advocated an eccentric system of spelling and adhered to a vegetarian diet. The desire to differentiate himself from the generality of mankind was due in large measure to personal whim but in part also to a deep-seated dissatisfaction with his time. His own day he looked upon as degenerate in politics, in morals, and in literature. For an antidote he looked to the remote past and

took pleasure in retrieving and illustrating the reliques of departed genius.

Joseph Ritson had his faults, and they were grievous. An unusual acidity of temper was exhibited in all his criticisms. He indulged a violence of language and a crude directness of speech which almost invariably gave offense. He was at odds with Warton and Shakespeare's editors, with Percy and Pinkerton, and he warred continually with the reviewers. He seemed in his own person to feel severely any attack, and from the pain thus acutely experienced he might have learned mercy but did not. He was despised as a critic though admired as a scholar. In all his writings he appeared cold, cynical, and unfeeling. Because he exhibited little poetic temper, because he usually judged verses by their antiquity and not by their intrinsic merits, he was stigmatized as pedantic. The unfavorable opinion of contemporaries was confirmed by Ritson's habits of life. His circle of acquaintances was not large, and he made no efforts to increase it. He knew Farmer, Reed, Stevens, Scott, and many less prominent persons, but his attacks upon Warton, Percy, Johnson, and others effectually cut him off from intercourse with them and with most of their friends. He lived the life of a recluse. He was never seen in court and was seldom encountered outside his chambers. He had little communication with those who lived about him and hardly knew the members of his own Inn. Every day his neat spare figure might have been seen moving rapidly from Gray's Inn to the British Museum and later back again. If one accosted him, he spoke briefly—even snappishly—while he moved about nervously and cast furtive glances in all directions as if seeking some means of escape. This daily walk was the extent of his exercise. At vacation time he slipped quietly away from London and spent a few weeks with friends and relatives in the north. These journeys were usually taken on foot, probably for the double purpose of reducing expenses and of securing the seclusion which he so much prized.

But there is another side to Ritson's character. Unattractive as he was to the stranger and repellant as he might be to the chance acquaintance, to his family and few intimate friends he was singularly kind, generous, and warm-hearted. His devotion to his father and mother, and after their death to his sister and her son, was sincere and disinterested. Those who knew him intimately say that when once within the seclusion of his chambers with a few tried friends, he became a lively and unreserved conversationalist. Although he was given to disputation and was tenacious of his own opinions, yet he was always open to conviction, and when once persuaded of his error he was quick to make frank reparation.

It is not known that Ritson ever sat for a portrait. He declined a request for an "original portrait" to be inserted in the *Monthly Mirror*, remarking facetiously that the only painting he had was an original of Ben Jonson, which he feared would not be accepted as a substitute. There is a silhouette in profile by Mrs. Park, which gives only a vague suggestion of his appearance. It is prefixed to the *Caledonian Muse* and to Haslewood's *Life of Ritson*. A half-length sketch by Gillray has been twice copied with the subject in slightly different positions. In the one which appears in *The Book of Days* he is represented as standing, quill in hand, before a table on which lies a book of poems; in the other he is before his book shelves, on which may be seen a few volumes suggestive of the outstanding characteristics of his life and work: Warton's *History*, the *Bible*, *Shakespeare*, *Metrical Romances*, and *Abstinence from Animal Food*. He is dressed in a long black coat closely buttoned about his thin form, and wears a high hat well down on his head. The forehead is bold, indicative of large intellectuality; the thin, pale face suggests inadequate nourishment. The nose is large, and the lower lip protrudes from a set and determinate jaw. The head is inclined slightly forward, and the shoulders are stooped from continual poring over books and manuscripts. But this is more of a caricature than a true portrait, say those who knew him personally. Gillray's sketch gives an inadequate conception of the "little neat old man, in his suit of customary black, with his gray hair and pale delicate complexion, tinged with 'Time's first rose'". He should have been taken in his evening chair, cheerfully chirruping some old saw or bardish rhyme".²

²Surtees, *History of Durham*, III, p. 195, note y.

APPENDIX A

ROBERT SMITH'S NARRATIVE OF RITSON'S LAST DAYS AND DEATH, AND TWO LETTERS OF H. C. SELBY TO BISHOP PERCY.¹

Narrative of Robt. Smith Esq. Bencher of Gray's Inn.

The late Mr. Ritson lived in the same Staircase with me in Gray's Inn for many years, and the common civilities of the Day passed between us, but nothing more. We never visited. I understood he possessed a great Singularity of Character, but he was ever polite and civil to me. Early in September, 1803, I frequently heard a great Swearing and Noise in his Chambers, and on meeting his Laundress on the Stairs, I asked her ye cause of the Disturbance I had heard. She answered, that she believed her *Master was out of his mind*, for his conduct in every respect proved him so, and that she was greatly afraid that in his Delirium he would do himself or her an injury. She said she had taken him his Dinner the Day before, but that he had not touch'd it and that he never ate animal Food. She was then going to him, but expressed a fear that he would burst into a Rage and abuse her as I had heard him before. The last time she was in the Chambers he had shut himself up; however she left his Dinner on the Table, and was then going to see if he had ate it. I said as she had expressed herself fearful I would go with her to her Master, which I accordingly did. I saw his Dinner on the Table, but he was still shut up in his Room. I ask'd the Laundress whether he had any relations in Town, she said he had not, but that he had a Nephew somewhere in the North who had lived with him for many Years, but that Mr. Ritson had *turned him out* of his House for *eating animal Food*. I desired her to endeavour to find out some of his Rela-

¹This material is given from the original manuscript in the library of Charles Davis, Esquire, of Kew Gardens. It has been previously referred to in two letters of Bishop Percy to Anderson, *Literary Illustrations*, Vol. VII, pp. 139, 153; and Sir Sidney Lee mentions it in his life of Ritson in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. Neither makes direct quotations from it. It is of interest in connection with the life of Ritson for two reasons. It gives the most exhaustive and the only intimate account of the morbid close of Ritson's life and effectively dissipates the haze of conjecture which has hitherto clouded comment on his end. Furthermore, it reveals the means taken by Percy to gain authentic information about the man who had for twenty years vigorously defamed his literary and personal character. The fact that Percy never published the material which he might then have used with telling effect is ample evidence of the generosity of his nature.

tions or Friends, and to apprise them of his unhappy Situation—and in the meantime to be very careful of him.

On the 10th of September about nine o'clock in the Evening, on my Return to Chambers, my Servant told me that Mr. Ritson had been making a great Noise, and that there was a great Light in his Room, which had alarmed the people in the Steward's office. I went immediately to the Steward's Office, and looking from his window I saw Mr. Ritson's Room strewn with Books and loose papers, some of which he was gathering up and throwing on the Fire, which occasioned the great Blaze, they had seen. He had a lighted chandle in his Hand which he carried about in a very dangerous manner. The Steward not being at home I sent for him to represent to him Mr. Ritson's extraordinary Conduct. However, being much alarmed, I went to Mr. Ritson's Chambers, and knocked at the Door several times, but could get no admission. At last a key was obtained from the Laundress, and Mr. Quin the Steward and myself with two Porters entered his Chambers. He appeared much confused on seeing us, and asked how we came in? We told him by means of the Laundress's Key. He then asked what we wanted? Mr. Quin told him we came in consequence of the great Blaze that appeared in his Chambers, believing them to be on Fire! He answered that his Fire had gone out, and that he was lighting it to make some Horse-reddish Tea.

Mr. Quin then represented to him the great Danger of making his Fire with loose papers, particularly as there was so many scattered about the Floor, some of which had actually taken Fire! Mr. Quin therefore begged he would permit the Porters to collect them together and put them away, and to do anything he wanted. Upon which he said No! No! and in the most peremptory manner ordered them to leave his Chambers, saying they were only Servants to the Society and had no Business in his Chambers. Mr. Quin observed that consistent with his Duty as Steward of the Inn he could not leave his Chambers in that Dangerous Situation. Mr. Ritson, then, appearing much enraged, swore he would make him, for that they came to rob him, and immediately went to his Bed-Room and returned with a drawn dagger in his Hand, at Sight of which Mr. Quin and the Porters immediately left the Chambers, Mr. Ritson pursuing them along the Passage, and they in their Hurry, shut the outer Door, leaving me in the Room. On his return I disarmed him, and begged him to sit down while I explained everything. He was then very complaisant, and said he did not mean to offend me, but swore Vengeance against those who had left the Room. He insisted on my going into his best Apartment, which I did and found his Books and papers scattered on the Floor as they were in the other Chamber, he asked me to drink with him but I refused. He paid me some Compli-

ments as a Neighbour, and said he would give me a History of his Life. He told me he had a great Passion for Books of which he possessed the finest Collection in England; That he had written upon many Subjects and had confuted many who had written on Law and Theology. He said he was then writing a pamphlet proving Jesus Christ an impostor but that something had lately discomposed him and he was therefore resolved to destroy many of his Manuscripts for which purpose he was then sorting his Papers!!! I heard him patiently for an hour and a half when I advised him to go to bed which he said he would do, and I left him seemingly composed. About an Hour after he became very violent and outrageous, throwing his Furniture about his Chambers, and breaking his Windows. I then went to him again and endeavored to pacify him but without Effect. He had a Dagger in one Hand and a Knife in the other, tho' I had taken the other Dagger from him and carried it to my own Chambers. He raved for a considerable time, 'till being quite exhausted he went to sleep. A person was then sent for from Megsdon to take care of him who remained with him five days, and said that his Derangement was incurable. I visited him every day when he appeared very glad to see me and said "here comes my Friend who will set me at Liberty" but violently abused his Keeper, and said *the Devil would torment him* for his Cruelty in keeping him so confined. It was thought proper by his Friends to remove him to a Madhouse where I understand he died in a few days. I have since learned that his Malady was a Family Disorder and that his Sister died mad.

31st March 1804.

ROBT. SMITH.

Gray's Inn, 6th April 1804.

My Dear Lord,

In consequence of your Lordship's letter of the 20th ult. which I was very happy to receive, as it gave me good Accounts of your Lordship's health, & that of your family, to all of whom I most sincerely wish well, I made application to my very worthy neighbor Mr. Smith, who I knew to be an intelligent man, who lived in the same Staircase with Ritson, & was well acquainted with all his whims and eccentricities, to give me the best and most particular relation he could to satisfy your Enquiries, for which purpose I read to him that part of your Lordship's last letter to me respecting it. Just as I was preparing to go into Essex, to pass a few days in the Easter holydays with my friends there, I received the foregoing report, which I hope may prove satisfactory to your Lordship. But as Mr. Smith in our conversation on the subject of Ritson's passions, prejudices, and sentiments in general, dropt some

expressions which I found he had omitted in the foregoing Recital, I gave him a call yesterday, and mentioned the Circumstances to him, which he perfectly recollected, and recapitulated them to me as he had done before. He says that Ritson frequently made such a noise and thumping in his Chambers as to disturb and alarm all his neighbors frequently, and that on these occasions he used to go down to Ritson's Chambers, which were on the first Floor or Story, & Smith's was on the 2d. and being a strong powerful Man, & Ritson a mere spider in comparison to him—he used to prevail on R. either by force, or by kind persuasions to give over making such a disturbance—at these times Ritson would appear sometimes very furious, enraged and violent to a degree and after he had fatigued himself by the Exertion of those horrid Passions he frequently, it seems, used to sit down, lay his hand in a pathetic and in a sort of ejaculating manner on his forehead & exclaim “Oh My God, what a miserable wretch am I!” “My poor distracted Head!” “When will there be an end of my distresses!” He would then start up again and act as wildly as before, until Mr. Smith who had obtained compleat command over him, insisted on his going again to bed, which he always did at Mr. Smith's request.

I ask'd Smith if He believed Ritson to be an Atheist,—his Answer was, that He did *not think so*:—else why should he send up ejaculations to God, or talk of the Devil tormenting people whom he believed had used him very ill. Smith said that he possessed the most consummate Pride, and had the highest opinion of his own Abilities in all Sciences; He say'd that He had had literary controversies with a great Number of Men of the First Talents in the Country, on subjects of their respective & several Studies; and that he had compleatly confuted *them all!!* As to the Benchers & Gentlemen of this Inn, they were all a parcel of Fools to him, & not worthy his Notice! He say'd he had for some time been engaged in writing the Work mentioned in Mr. Smith's Recital as before related by him—viz. “To prove *That Our Saviour Jesus Christ was an Impostor*”—but something had happened to prevent his finishing the work, & which therefore he had not then concluded; Whether He had been struck by conviction or by remorse, or from any and what other cause, it may be perhaps for ever impossible to say, but I understand that he consumed the Sheets, which contained what He had written on that extraordinary Subject, in the flames. I do believe that His Madness originated in his Pride, in thinking himself the most learned, and Extraordinary Genius of the Age in which he lived,—and that there were few if any that were fit for him to associate with in this world; what He thought, if he thought at all, of that which is to come, it is not in my

power to say not having had any sort of intercourse, or acquaintance with him.

I beg my most friendly respects to Mrs. Percy & such of your Family as are with you, and that your Lordship will believe me with the truest Esteem and regard,

Ever Your's most faithfully,
H. C. SELBY.

Grays Inn, London.
14th June 1804.

My Lord!

I hope the Complaint in your Eyes has been compleatly removed, which by your Lordship's last letter I observed had been very troublesome & inconvenient to you. I have lately seen Mr. Smith on the subject of your Lordship's letter to me, who has no sort of objection that a just & true Account should be given to the World, of the late Mr. Joseph Ritson's Character, Conduct & Principles, & which I conceive is very proper to be done; When I was with him (Mr. Smith) He sent for a woman of the Name of Elizabeth Kirby, who was a *native of the same Town*, viz. Stockton-upon-Tees, where Ritson drew his first breath, was about his own age, and perfectly well acquainted with him and all his family. This Mrs. Kirby informed us, that Ritson's father was a Menial Servant to a Tobacconist at Stockton—afterwards he served a Mr. Robinson a Merchant there, at which time his mother was also a servant in the same family and was with child to the Father before he married her, & which proved to be a Daughter who some time ago died of Madness! Ritson went to a Latin School at Stockton, and was clever at his books, & an apt scholar; On his quitting the Latin School he was put to a Conveyancer, a Mr. Bradley of the same town, who I understand knew his business extremely well. After having remained with him for some year or two, he came up to Town; He used to take his Journeys on foot, with a couple of shirts in his pocket, & if he found his bundle too heavy, he would, without hesitation, throw one of his shirts away! He was entered a Student of the Society of Grays Inn, & after keeping his Terms, & being of the proper Standing in the Inn, he was called to the Bar! in this transaction He could not but have taken the usual Oaths of Allegiance, Supremacy, &c. &c. as no person can be admitted to a Barrister without taking those Oaths. However I find by Mrs. Kirby's declaration and solemn affirmation, that in taking those Oaths He must have played the Hypocrite: For she says, that he *most undoubtedly was* an Atheist, & that He very often declared himself such to her:—He did not believe there was any such Being, as Almighty God!! or that there was any future State of Rewards or Punishments,

& the greatest devil he knew, was a nasty, crabbed, ill natured old Woman!! When he was young & at School, he never associated with other boys, but always with the girls, and they never liked his company, but got rid of him as well as they could; and at last he was forsook by everybody. This Mrs. Kirby is a very stout, hearty woman about 54 years of age, & she tells me that she had complete Mastery over him, and could make him do anything she pleased,—he was so much afraid of her. Of the rest of his History, Your Lordship is in possession, and at liberty to make what use of it you may think proper and right.

Your Lordship has been rightly informed as to Mr. Stirling's Residence, which for some time has been at No. 44 in Parliament Street, Westminster. Neither the size of my paper, nor the Shortness of my time at present, will permit me to give your Lordship the detail of my Reconciliation but I hope we shall be permitted to meet again in this world, when I will with pleasure give it you 'Vive Voce'. I dined at Northumberland House about three Weeks ago, with a small Party of Northumbrians, and was very cheerfully & agreeably entertained. The young ladies are very mild, easy, & good humoured—but seem more diffident than Ladies of their Rank generally do.

I beg to be most respectfully remembered to Mrs. Percy & all your Lordship's Family, and that your Lordship will believe always with great Veneration & Esteem, your Lordship's affectionate Friend, and most faithful Humble Servant.

H. C. SELBY

The Right Revd
The Lord Bishop of Dromore
Dromore-House
Ireland.

APPENDIX B

PASSAGES CANCELLED IN RITSON'S *Ancient English Metrical Romances*

The passages cancelled in *Metrical Romances* because of their extreme personal bias and afterwards printed and bound with a few copies of the published work are here given together with the modified passages by which they were replaced. The cancelled material is italicized; the substitution which appeared in the regularly printed edition follows in square brackets.

VOL. I.

Page ix, line 7: Achilles, likewise, the celebrated champion of the Greeks, was the son of Thetis, a sea-gooddess; as Aeneas, the pretended founder of the Roman empire, was of Venus, the goddess of love; and all these fancies of a poetical imagination are to be *as firmly believed as the Jewish or Christian religion, the books of Moses, or the new testament*. [firmly believed, though nothing more than mere romance.]

Page xlv, line 22: This Turpin is pretended to be the Archbishop of Rheims, whose true name, however, was Tilpin, and who died before Charlemagne, though Robert Gaguin, in his licentious translation of this work, 1527, makes him, *like Moses, the Jew prophet, relate his own death*. [like some one else, relate his own death.]

Page lx, line 6: The same effects had not long before been already produced upon the Romans, as they have in modern times upon the Mohawks, who, in consequence of *becoming Christians*, have lost all that was valuable in their national character, and are become the most despicable tribe that is left unexterminated. [a certain change.]

Page lxx, note: The loss sustained by the vulgar of their Saxon version would have been effectually remedied by *their French one, and peradventure, it would have been just as well for the Saxons if they had never had a bible to read*. [the Latin Vulgate, which the priests continued to explain to them in their vernacular idiom (for, in fact, there was no French translation of the Bible); and the reading of it might have contributed to the knowledge of the Latin tongue.]

Page cxlviii, line 1: So that, it seems, the fabulous history of Geoffrey of Monmouth was to have been the platform of his sublime poetical structure; *but he, whether wisely or not, abandoned one series of lies for another*. [but this project, whether wisely or not, he abandoned.]

VOL. III

Page 238, line 20: Oaths and curses, in fact, are, at this day, common to most nations in the world, as they were formerly, to the Greeks and Romans. *They are foolish, no doubt, and unmeaning, but it is the extreme of bigotry and idiotism to consider them as wicked or punish them as criminal.*

Page 247, line 1: Merlin, a powerful magician, *and a more clear-sighted and veracious prophet than the Jew Isaiah*, was begotten by a devil, or incubus, upon a young damsel of great beauty, and daughter, as Geoffrey of Monmouth asserts, to the king of Demetia.

Page 247, lines 7, 11: He removed by a wonderful machine of his own invention, the giants-dance, now Stone-henge, from Ireland, to Salisbury plain, where part of it *by the favour of Almighty providence* is still standing; and in order to enable Uther Pendragon, king of Britain to enjoy Igera, the wife of Gorlois, Duke of Cornwall, transformed him, by magical art, into the likeness of her husband; which amorous connection, (Igera being *like the Bathsheba of the old testament* rendered an honest woman by the murder of her spouse, and timely inter-marriage with king Uther,) enlightened the world, like another Aemena, with a second Hercules, videlicet, the illustrious Arthur.

Page 248, line 15: His prophecies, which were first published in The British History, *are fulfilling every day, like those of the old clothesmen of Judaea, or the still more Merlinical rhapsodist of The Revelation of the New Jerusalem.* [have since gone through repeated editions, in Latin, French, and English.]

Page 321, line 28: That the Christians of former ages, *a most ignorant, bigoted and superstitious sect*, appear to have entertained an inveterate antipathy to the Mahometans (who, certainly, would not have been much less intolerant) is apparent from the ancient romances of chivalry, French or English, in which this equally polite and religious appellation, frequently occurs.

Page 349, line 5: *This was Jesus Christ, who, in the interval between his crucifixion and his ascension, made an inroad into the infernal regions and plundered them of all the damned souls he thought worth carrying off. This miraculous event, though unnoticed by the four evangelists, is nevertheless circumstantially related in the Gospel of Nicodemus; and in honest Tom Hearne's appendix to his edition of John Fordun, the Scotchman's lying chronicle, is the engraving of an ancient picturesque representation thereof, in which Christ (not Saint Patrick, as is falsely pretended by Doctor Johnson) in so desperate an adventure, armed with his invincible cross, is opposed at the very mouth of hell fire, by a devil*

blowing a horn and exclaiming in a manner truly diabolical, "OUT OUT ABONGST." (Refer to page 1402-3; and, for what Johnson has said, to Stevens's *Shakspeare* 1793, vii, 342.) It seems alluded to in the first epistle of Peter iii, 18, 19: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the spirit; by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison," and in the apostles' creed, it is expressly said "He descended into hell." [This means Jesus Christ, who, in the interval between his crucifixion and ascension, is said, in the apostles' creed, to have "descended into hell". This visitation is related, most at large, in Nichodemus's Gospel. In Hearne's Appendix to Fordun's *Scotichronicon* (p. 1482-3), is a singular engraving from an old illumination, in which "*Ihesus Christus (resurgens a mortuis spoliat infernum,*" not Saint Patrick, as Dr. Johnson mistakes) "is represented", as he says, "visiting hell, and putting the devils into great confusion . . . of whom one . . . [with a prong and a horn] has a label issuing out of his mouth, with these words, "OUT OUT ABONGST!" (Note in *Shakspeare*, 1793, VII, 342.)]

APPENDIX C.

I. A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE PUBLISHED WORKS OF JOSEPH RITSON.

1. *Versees addressed to the Ladies of Stockton. In the Newcastle Miscellany*, 1772.
 Reprinted at Newcastle, n. d.
 Again, as an Appendix to Joseph Haslewood's *Some Account of the Life and Publications of the Late Joseph Ritson, Esq.* London, 1824.
2. *Tables, shewing the descent of the Crown of England*. 1778.
 Second impression, 1783.
3. *The St*ckt*n Jubilee: or, Shakspeare in all his glory*. Newcastle, 1781.
4. *Observations on the three first volumes of the History of English Poetry. In a Familiar Letter to the Author*. London, 1782.
5. *Fabularum Romanensium Bibliotheca: a general catalogue of old Romances, French, Italian, Spanish and English*. 2 vols. London. [Only two sheets printed.]
6. *Remarks, Critical and Illustrative, on the Text and Notes of the Last Edition of Shakspeare*. London, 1783.
7. *A Select Collection of English Songs, with their Original Airs; and a Historical Essay on the Origin and Progress of National Song*. 3 vols. London, 1783.
 Second edition, with additional songs and occasional notes by Thomas Park. 3 vols. London, 1813.
8. *The Bishoprick Garland, or Durham Minstrel. Being a choice collection of Excellent Songs relating to the above county*. Stockton, 1784.
 New edition, corrected, Newcastle, 1792.
 Again, See No. 33.
9. *Gammer Gurton's Garland: or the Nursery Parnassus; a choice collection of Pretty Songs and Verses, for the amusement of all little good children who can neither read nor run*. Stockton, 1784.
 Reprinted, with additions, London, 1809.
 Again, London, 1810.
 Again, Glosgow, 1866.
10. *The Spartan Manual, or Tablet of Morality: being a genuine Collection of the Apophthegms, Maxims, and Precepts, of the Philosophers, Heroes, and other great and celebrated Characters of*

Antiquity; under proper heads. For the Improvement of Youth, and the promotion of Wisdom and Virtue. London, 1785.

Reprinted privately, Glasgow, 1873.

11. *The Comedy of Errors*, with notes. London, 1787. [Only two sheets printed.]
12. *The Quip Modest; a few words by way of Supplement to Remarks, Critical and Illustrative, on the Text and Notes of the Last edition of Shakspeare; occasioned by a Republication of that Edition, revised and augmented by the Editor of Dodsleys Old Plays.* London, 1788.
13. *The Yorkshire Garland: being a curious collection of old and new songs concerning that famous county.* Part I. York, 1788. [It was never continued.]
Again, See No. 33.
14. *A Digest of the Proceedings of the Court Leet of the Manor and Liberty of Savoy, parcel of the Duchy of Lancaster, in the County of Middlesex; from the year 1682 to the present time.* London, 1789.
Again, See No. 25.
15. *Ancient Songs, from the time of King Henry the Third to the Revolution.* London, 1790.
Second edition, *Ancient Songs and Ballads from the reign of King Henry the Second to the Revolution. Collected by Joseph Ritson, Esq.* 2 vols. London, 1829.
Third edition, revised by W. C. Hazlitt. London, 1877.
16. *Pieces of Ancient Popular Poetry: from Authentic Manuscripts and Old Printed Copies. Adorned with cuts.* London, 1791.
Second edition, London, 1833.
Again, revised by E. Goldsmid. 2 vols. London, 1884.
17. *The Jurisdiction of the Court Leet: Exemplified in the Articles which the Jury or Inquest for the King, in that Court, is charged and Sworn, and by law enjoined, to Inquire of and Present. Together with Approved Precedents.* London, 1791.
Again, See No. 25.
Second edition, with great additions. London, 1809.
Third edition, corrected. London, 1816.
18. *The Office of Constable: being an entirely new compendium of the Law concerning that Ancient Minister for the Conservation of the Peace. Carefully compiled from the best authorities. With a Preface; and an Introduction, containing some account of the origin and antiquity of the office.* London, 1791.
Again, See No. 25.
Second edition, enlarged. London, 1815.

19. *Cursory Criticisms on the Edition of Shakspeare published by Edmond Malone.* London, 1792.
20. *The North-Country Chorister; an unparallaled variety of Excellent Songs collected and published together, for general amusement, by a Bishoprick Ballad Singer.* Durham, 1792.
Second edition, London, 1802.
Again, See No. 33.
21. *Dido: A Tragedy; as it was performed at the Theatre Royal in Drury-Lane, with universal applause. By Joseph Reed, Author of The Register Office, Tom Jones, &c.* London, printed 1792, published 1808.
22. *The Northumberland Garland; or Newcastle Nightingale; a matchless collection of Famous Songs.* Newcastle, 1793.
Again, See No. 33.
23. *The English Anthology.* 3 vols. London, 1793-4.
24. *Scotish Songs.* 2 vols. London, 1794.
Again, in one volume omitting the Historical Essay and the musical notation, *Scotish Songs and Ballads, collected by Joseph Ritson. New and revised edition with glossary and index.* London, 1866.
Second edition, edited by J. Alexander. 2 vols. Glasgow, 1869.
25. *Law Tracts, by Joseph Ritson, of Gray's Inn, Barrister.* London, 1794. [Comprising Nos. 14, 17, 18.]
26. *Poems on interesting events in the reign of King Edward III: written anno MCCCLII, by Laurence Minot. With a preface, dissertations, notes, and glossary.* London, 1795.
Second edition, *Poems written anno MCCCLII, by Laurence Minot. With Introductory Dissertations On the Scotch Wars of Edward III, On his claim to the Throne of France; and Notes and Glossary.* By Joseph Ritson. London, 1825.
27. *Robin Hood: a collection of all the ancient Poems, Songs, and Ballads, now extant relative to that celebrated English Outlaw. To which are prefixed historical anecdotes of his life.* 2 vols. London, 1795.
Second edition, London, 1832.
Other editions, London, 1840, 1845, 1853, 1862, 1884, 1885; Glasgow, 1858.
28. *Bibliographia Poetica: A Catalogue of English Poets, of the Twelfth, Thirteenth, Fourteenth, Fifteenth, and Sixteenth, Centurys, with a short account of their works.* London, 1802.
29. *An Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food, as a Moral Duty.* By Joseph Ritson. London, 1802.

30. *Ancient English Metrical Romances*. 3 vols. London, 1802.
 Second edition, *Ancient English Metrical Romances. Selected and published by Joseph Ritson, and revised by Edmund Goldsmid*. 3 vols. Edinburgh, 1884-5.
 From this collection were separately published: (1) *A Dissertation on Romance and Minstrelsy. To which is appended the Ancient Metrical Romance of Ywaine and Gawin*. Edinburgh, 1891.
 (2) *Thomas Chestre: Launfal*. Edinburgh, 1891.
31. *Practical Points, or, Maxims in Conveyancing, drawn from the daily experience of a very extensive practice. By a late Eminent Conveyancer. To which are added, Critical Observations on the various and essential parts of A Deed. By the late J. Ritson, Esq.* London, 1804.
 Again, London, 1826.
32. *Original Memoirs written during the great War; being the Life of Sir H. Slingsby, and Memoirs of Captain Hodgson. With notes by Sir W. Scott, Bart.* Edinburgh, 1806. [The Advertisement to Hodgson's Memoirs was written by Ritson.]
33. *Northern Garlands. Edited by the late Joseph Ritson, Esq.* London, 1810. [Comprising Nos. 8, 13, 20, 22, each with a separate title page dated London, 1809. Edited by Joseph Haslewood.]
 Reprinted, Edinburgh, 1887 and 1888.
34. *The Office of Bailiff of a Liberty. By Joseph Ritson, Esq., Barrister at Law, Late High Bailiff of the Savoy.* London, 1811. [Edited by Joseph Frank.]
35. *The Caledonian Muse: A chronological Selection of Scottish Poetry from the earliest times. Edited by the late Joseph Ritson, Esq. With vignettes engraved by Heath, after the designs of Stotard.* London, printed 1785; and now first published, 1821.
36. *The Life of King Arthur: from Ancient Historians and Authentic Documents. By Joseph Ritson, Esq.* London, 1825. [Edited by Joseph Frank.]
37. *Memoirs of the Celts or Gauls. By Joseph Ritson, Esq.* London, 1827. [Edited by Joseph Frank.]
38. *Annals of the Caledonians, Picts, and Scots; and of Strathclyde, Cumberland, Galloway, and Murray. By Joseph Ritson, Esq.* 2 vols. Edinburgh, 1828. [Edited by Joseph Frank.]
39. *Letters from Joseph Ritson, Esq., to Mr. George Paton. To which is added, A Critique by John Pinkerton, Esq., upon Ritson's Scottish Songs.* Edinburgh, 1829. [Edited by James Maidment. Only 100 copies printed.]

40. *Fairy Tales, Now first collected: To which are prefixed Two Dissertations: 1. On Pygmies. 2. On Fairies. By Joseph Ritson, Esq.* London, 1831.

Another edition, *Fairy Tales, Legends, and Romances illustrating Shakespeare and other early English Writers. To which are prefixed two dissertations: 1. On Pigmies. 2. On Fairies. With Preface by W. C. Haslitt.* London, 1875.

41. *The Letters of Joseph Ritson, Esq. Edited chiefly from originals in the possession of his nephew. To which is prefixed a Memoir of the Author by Sir Harris Nicolas.* 2 vols. London, 1833.

II. THE UNPUBLISHED MANUSCRIPTS OF JOSEPH RITSON.

1. Precedents in Conveyancing.
2. Treatise on Conveyancing.
3. Precedents by Mr. Bradley.
4. Wills drawn by the late Ralph Bradley, Esq., of Stockton in the County of Durham. 2 vols.
5. The Privileges of the Duchy of Lancaster, by Charter, Statute, and Judicial Determination.
6. Antient and Modern Deeds, Charters, Grants, Surveys, and other Instruments, Writings, Extracts, &c., relating to the Manor, Borough, Township, Chapelry, and Parish of Stockton, in County Durham. [MS. Gough, Durham 1, Bodleian.]
7. The Institution, Authority, Acts and Proceedings of Burgesses of the Savoy—Repertory of Evidences in the Duchey Office relating to Manor and Liberty of the Savoy—and other papers relative to the Hospital, with the Views and Plans, framed and glazed, of the Savoy.
8. Topographical Rines [sic].
9. Description of the North-East Part of Cleveland, with notes.
10. Villare Dunelmense, the names of all the towns, villages, hamlets, castles, sea-houses, halls, granges, and other houses and buildings, having any appellation within the Bishopricks or county palatine of Durham.
11. A Glossary of obsolete or difficult Words occurring in the Charters granted to the Duchy of Lancaster.
12. A List of River Names in Great Britain and Ireland, with a few etymological notes on them. [MS. Douce 340, Bodleian.]
13. An Enquiry into the Connection between the Families of Bailiol and Comyn in the thirteenth century.
14. An English Dictionary, intended for publication.
15. Gleanings of English Grammar, chiefly with a view to illustrate

and establish a just system of Orthography, upon etymological principles.

16. Dissertation on the use of Self.
17. Notes for a life of Philip, Duke of Wharton.
18. The Poetical Works of Mr. George Knight, formerly of Stockton, Shoemaker of facecious memory.
19. Extracts of Entries (chiefly of songs and ballads) in the Stationers' books, from a transcript by the late W. Herbert.
20. Select Scottish Poems. [MS. in Mr. Perry's collection.]
21. Scottish Ballads. [MS. in Mr. Perry's collection.]
22. Bibliographia Scotica; Anecdotes Biographical and Literary of Scottish Writers, Historians, and Poets, from the earliest accounts to the nineteenth Century. In two parts, intended for publication.
23. Notes on Shakspeare, and Various Readings. [MS. in Mr. Perry's collection.]
24. Notes and corrections on Shakspeare, prepared for the press. 3 vols.

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BY
KUNO MEYER

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I. *Sualtair*.

It has repeatedly been pointed out by Thurneysen, John MacNeill and myself that certain figures in ancient Irish historical and legendary lore owe their existence, or at least their names, to a misunderstanding of words or phrases, a misinterpretation of place-names, or to the mistakes of careless or ignorant scribes. Thus John MacNeill showed in the *Zeitschrift f. celt. Phil.* X p. 86 that King Amadair Flidais, who figures in the early genealogies, evolved from a misreading of a *máthair Flidais* 'his mother (was) Flidais'. This particular mistake belongs to a class of errors which abound in Irish as well as in Welsh genealogical tables. Indeed, one of the charges brought against the compilers of pedigrees by Gilla in Chomded, a poet of the twelfth century, in his poem beginning *A Rí richid, réidig dam*, is precisely of this nature. He says, LL p. 144 a:

Failet sē muid, sain mebair, cummaiscit crāeb ngenelaig:
totinsma dāerchland ic dul i lloc sāerchland re slonnud;
Torrchí mogad, mod mebla, ocus dībad tigerna,
serg na sāerchland, étig ūath, la forbairt na n-athechthūath;
Miscribend do gnē eōlais do lucht ulc' in aneōlais,
nó lucht ind eōlais, nī ferr, gnūt ar mūin miscribend.

'There are six modes specially to be remembered, which confound a genealogical table: a wholesale insertion of baseborn folk taking the place of nobles in surnames;

Multiplying² serfs, a shameful mode, and extinction of lords; reducing the aristocracy, a hideous error, by increasing the rent-paying tribes;

Miswriting in the guise of learning by the evil folk of ignorance; or it is the learned, which is no better, who for the sake of pelf perpetrate the miswriting'.

As regards legend, Thurneysen has pointed out in *Zeitschr.* X p. 424 that King Bran mac Febail in *Imram Brain* originates from a misinterpretation of the name of the promontory called *Srúb Brain* 'Raven's Beak', as if it were 'Bran's Headland'; and in the same way I have shown (*Zur kelt. Wortkunde* § 41) that the ancient Scottish place name *Aird Echde*, Ptolemy's *Ἐπίδιον ἄκρον*, mistaken to mean *Aird*

¹ulc Facs.

²Literally 'pregnancy'.

Echdi 'Echde's Point', led to the invention of a fabulous warrior Echde.¹ A third instance of this kind is afforded by the place name *Inber Scene*, which denotes the knife-shaped estuary of the Kenmare river, being interpreted as 'Scian's Estuary', whence a heroine Scian figures among the fabulous early settlers of Ireland. See 'Ériu' II p. 85.

I believe that a somewhat similar mistake is responsible for the name, if not for the creation of another well-known figure of ancient Irish story-telling, that of the human father of Cuchulinn. In pagan tradition Cuchulinn was the son, or rather the reincarnation of the god Lug. A later age felt the need of providing him with a mortal father, a rather shadowy figure as such after-inventions are wont to be, except for one fine episode in *Táin Bó Cúalngi*, in which he plays the chief part. The best-known form of the name by which he goes is *Sualtaim*, but it is the latest among several. We also find *Sualtach* (sometimes spelt *Subhaltach*) and *Soalta*, *Soa(i)lte*, which latter forms are the earliest. They occur in the old-Irish tale 'Serglige Conculaind' (Ir. T. I p. 209) in the following couplet:

Diammad cara dam co se Cūchulaind mac Soalte;

in the oldest version of the Death of Conla, where Emer addresses her husband: *a maicc saigthig Soailte* (Ér. I 118 § 8), and in 'Siaburcharpát Conculaind' (LU p. 113b 42): *ar nī siabra rodatánic, is Cūchulaind mac Soalta*. In all three cases the name is not inflected, which seems to show that we have not here to do with a genuine old proper name.² Now by itself *mac soalte* would mean 'well-nurtured son', and that this is actually the original phrase to which the name of the father may be traced is proved, I think, by its occurrence in a piece of *retoric* or alliterative prose, in which Leborcham addresses Cuchulinn as follows (LL p. 119a):

Atraí, a Chūculaind, comérig, cobairthe Mag³ Murthemne ar firu Galeōn⁴, a gein Loga soalta, sói frit churad cathchlessu! 'Get thee up,

¹I may add here that in Cormac's Glossary § 585 the name of the promontory has actually been changed to *Aird Echdai Echbēil*: Dotictis didiu na bāi sin Echdi Echbēil for ingeilt a hAird Echdai Echbēil a hAlhai i crích Dāl Riata co mbitis i Seimniu Ulad.

²In the same way, as is well known, names of foreign origin are generally undeclined in Irish, a circumstance which led John MacNeill to regard the indeclinable Irish name *Brēnainn* as borrowed from O. W. *brēnhin* (contracted from *brēnhin*).

³After *mag* a small space is left vacant by the scribe. Evidently some word had become illegible in the manuscript from which he copied, probably some alliterative adjective, perhaps *molbthach*.

⁴*firu galeoin* Facs. Cf. *Fir Galiōn*, LL 4b 16; *clā Galiōn*, Rennes Dinds. § 160.

Cuchulinn, arise, come to the help of the Plain of Murthemne against the men of Galeoin, thou well-nurtured son of Lug, address thyself to thy heroic battle-feats!

The later form *Sualtach* (TBC ed. Wind. l. 547, Rawl. B. 502, p. 158, 32) suggests the meaning 'well-jointed', while *Sualtaim* may be looked upon as the superlative of *su-alta*, the genitive having, as so often in proper names, taken the place of the nominative. Lastly I may mention that the father of Sualtach is called Becalta and his grandfather Mōralta in the pedigree in Rawl. l. c., which later MSS. alter into Begfoltach and Mōrfoltach (see TBC ed. Wind. p. 389 n. 2).

II. *Fer Diad the Nibelung.*

In his essay on Germanic influences in old-Irish language and legend¹ Heinrich Zimmer endeavored among other things to show that the ancient Irish had to some extent become acquainted with the Nibelungen story. It was the name and some of the attributes of the hero Fer Diad in the epic tale Táin Bó Cúalngi that reminded him at the same time of a Nibelung and of Siegfried. He interpreted his name as 'Man of Mist', drew attention to the fact that in a poem placed in the mouth of Cúchulinn the epithet *nél ndatha* 'shapely cloud' is applied to him, and compared the horn skin (*congan-chness*) worn by him in battle to that of Siegfried.

Against this Windisch² pointed out that the name means rather 'Man of Smoke'³, and that, unlike Siegfried's horny skin, Fer Diad's *conganchness* was a kind of armament like a *lorica*, a cuirass made of horn, which could be opened and closed. But there still remained the epithet *nél ndatha*, which even Windisch allows to be favorable to Zimmer's theory⁴, in so much as *nél*, though its etymological connexion with Germ. *nebel* O. N. *nífl* seems doubtful⁵, unquestionably means 'cloud'. However, the passage in which the expression is found needs a closer study than it has yet received.

It occurs in the lament in which Cúchulinn bewails the death of his old fellow pupil at his hands, but only in one version of it, that of the book of Leinster (LL), which Windisch has made the staple of his text. Now the numerous blunders of the scribe of LL, especially when copying poetry, are by this time notorious. As I have more than once pointed out, the early date and the beautiful penmanship of this manuscript should not blind us against the almost incredibly careless habits and perverse ingenuity of the scribe, which make LL, take it all in all, one of the least trustworthy of early Irish MSS.

¹See Zeitschr. für deutsches Altertum XXXII, p. 293.

²In his edition of Táin Bó Cúalngi, p. 439.

³There is nothing mythical about a name like *Fer Diad*. It is evidently a nickname denoting perhaps a man with a smoke-colored complexion or hair, or referring to some accident at his birth, or the like.

⁴"Für Zimmers Annahme scheint der Ausdruck *mar Fer nDiad nél ndatha* LL 87b 43 zu sprechen".

⁵See Thurneysen, Handbuch § 122: "*nél* kann nicht auf *neþl *nebhlos zurückgeführt werden".

The passage stands as follows in LL, p. 87b (Wind. l. 4022):

Ní bha lām lāich lethas cárna caurad mar Fer nDiad nēl ndatha.

Here are two glaring blunders, one of which, *lethas* instead of *letras*, Windisch, adopting the reading of the other MSS, has already corrected. As the lament is throughout composed in alliterative prose, in which at least two successive fully stressed syllables must alliterate, *Diad* coming after the two unstressed syllables *mar Fer*¹ should begin a new alliterative group. The reading *nēl* must then be corrupt, while *ndatha* may stand. The true reading which fulfils all requirements, will be found in Egerton 209 and in Stowe, the former of which reads *ndeilinn datha*, the latter *nēl— data*, where *nēl—* stands for *n[d]elinn*. Here *delinn* is the accusative of *deil* f. 'a rod', which is inflected as an nn-stem also in *cor delenn* 'casting a rod'. The word is in poetry often applied to a warrior who smites his enemies like a rod, as in the poem on King Aed mac Diarmata of Leinster (Ir. T. I 319) who is called *in deil delgnaide* 'the distinguished rod', in *Älteste Dichtung* I p. 41 § 35 (*deil flann*), or in *Saltair na Rann* l. 6115, where Saul is called *in deil dūrchathach na tres*² 'the hard-battling rod of the combats', or *ibid.* l. 5755, where it is applied to Goliath (*deil adbul* 'a huge rod').

Our passage should therefore be translated: 'There will not be found a hero's hand to hack warriors' flesh like that of *Fer Diad*³, the shapely rod'; and so the 'Nibelung' *Fer Diad* and the notion that the ancient Irish had become acquainted with the story of Siegfried vanish alike into smoke.

¹In personal or tribal names the first element of which is *fer*, *mac*, *da*, *māel*, *mēss*, *cū* &c. the chief stress is on the second element, which alone can alliterate. So also in words like *macsamla* which in SR l. 7007 alliterates with *Solman*.

²Similarly, *a deil tresā tromthorāig*, 'O rod of a heavy-massed combat', Ir. T. III p. 11, where another MS. wrongly reads *a delb tresā*.

³Here we have an idiomatic construction which is not always rightly translated. Thus e.g. *is mō do chumachta-so indau-so* (Ir. T. III p. 236, l. 30) should be rendered 'thy power is greater than mine', not 'als ich bin', as Windisch translates on p. 249. Cf. *ib.* p. 236, 37. Similarly *mō a greim oldās cach rī* 'his power is greater than that of any king', Corm. § 884.

III. NOTES ON IRISH METRICS

1. The alliteration and pronunciation of *th*.

The period when *th* ceased to be pronounced as a dental spirant, and the pronunciation as *h*, which it has in the modern language, set in, has never been exactly defined. As has been repeatedly pointed out, it still had its full dental value in the ninth century, when the Norse rendered Ir. *Ethne* by *Edna*, *Dubthach* by *Dufpahr*, &c. As for the later pronunciation, Thurneysen in his 'Handbuch' § 119 rightly says that it had come into existence by the eleventh century, if not earlier.

I believe we can fix the period more exactly by observing the practice followed by poets with regard to the alliteration of *th*. It is true, in Irish poetry the laws governing the alliteration of consonants are traditional and artificial, and no longer represent the actual pronunciation, their origin dating back to a time before either lenition or nasalisation had set in, so that e.g. *th* may alliterate with *t*, *mb* (pronounced *m*) with *b*, &c.

But by the side of this traditional alliteration we find middle- and modern-Irish poets occasionally adopting the more natural practice of alliterating according to the pronunciation of their time, and this is particularly the case with *th*, which is sometimes found to alliterate with *s*, i.e. *h*, and even with vowels. I have already briefly referred to this practise in my 'Primer of Irish Metrics', p. 4, § 4, but without attempting to fix the period when it began. Since then I have paid greater attention to the subject and am now able to say that this kind of alliteration first occurs in poems composed during the second half of the tenth century. Thus Cinaed ūa Hartacáin, who died in 975, in a poem edited by Lucius Gwynn in 'Ériu' vol. VII has the following line (p. 225 § 45):

airisfet-sa im thoss¹ im síd

'As for me, I shall remain quietly in my fairy-dwelling'.

And again, p. 225 § 45:

i n-ebras riss 'na síd thoich

'what was said to him in his native² fairy-dwelling'.

¹The editor proposes to alter *thoss* into *šoss*; but cf. SR 1607, 1633, 1829 (*tass*) &c.

²Not 'hospitable', as the editor renders.

In both cases we have to deal with the second lines of a couplet where alliteration is imperative, a rule which Cinaed observes strictly throughout the poem.

Next we find that *th* like *s* comes to alliterate with vowels, as in the following instance from 'Poems from the Dindsenchas' edited by Edward Gwynn (p. 14):

don dún ulc arna thōraind

'to the whole stronghold after it had been marked out'.

It will be instructive to collect all examples of this kind of alliteration from another poem composed during the end of the tenth century, *Saltair na Rann*, in which they occur by the side of numerous instances of the older practice (*th* : *t*). I have noticed the following:

106 *ōthā thalmáin co ēsca*; cf. 416.

288 *fodasn-íada im thalmáin*.

844 *día nam thairbiur fond ósur*.

1338 *forfēmdim a thimarguin*.

1396 *darm thimna, darm forcetal*.

1462 *iarm thimnaib, iarm forcetlaib*.

1479 *d'imaithbeur in cach than*.

1532 *a mo thigerna, a Adaim*; cf. 1578, 2052.

1577 *dēna mo thinchosc di sáin*.

1852 *fria thimna, fria forngaire*.

2952 *dambeir fria ais día thegdais*.

5846 *fo theisc sáinigthe sámuaíl*.

7160 *srúaim uisci do thalmannaib*.

8256 *muintir thalman is iffeirnn*.

The following may serve as examples from later poems, in addition to those from the 'Book of Fenagh' cited in the 'Primer of Ir. Metrics' l.c.:

do thuidecht is do sāeghal, Anecd. I 25 § 7.

ar romēt do sātha thair, ib. 34 § 76.

arna thuitim 'san inguin, ib. 36 § 89.

tarmairt a sūil mo thachtadh, ib. § 92.

d' ithi a sūla nīr thoisc āigh, ib. 37 § 98.

amārach t[h]icc mo sāeghal, ib. 39 § 113.

do bheith aghaidh fo thalmhain, Misc. K. Meyer 358 § 6.

We may then regard it as certain that the change in the pronunciation of *th* set in during the course of the tenth century and was an accomplished fact by the end of that period.

2. Rare *debide-rhymes*.

In 'Ériu' VII p. 10 I have drawn attention to certain couplets in

debide metre in which the usual order of the rhyme words is reversed, the longer word appearing in the first verse and the shorter in the second. I have since found some further examples in middle-Irish poetry.

Ancient Laws, vol. IV p. 218:

In treas seachtmain nach inill tuc lúan ocus máirt da' lind.

Táin Bó Cúalngi, ed. Windisch, l. 2770:

Dia mbad mē bad chomarlid da² betis oic di cach leith,

or, as LU reads in the second verse, *bīad slōg imme di cach leith.*

Here, it is true, both Egerton 93 and H. 2. 17 place the second verse before the first.

Ibidem, l. 2780:

Mas ē Dubthach Dōcltenga ar cūl na slūag dosrenga.

Scéla Cano, Anecd. I 13, 6:

A maicc Chondaid³ iar mBernas, gnīm dorignis ro bo bras.

LL p. 277b: *A Féidelm, a foltbuide, bēra mac do Dubthach de.*

In the same volume of 'Ériu' p. 12 I collected a number of couplets in *debide*, in which long vowels in syllables with consonantal ending rhyme with short ones. This is a license which even skilful poets allow themselves occasionally, as the following complete list of such rhymes from *Saltair na Rann* will show, in addition to the two instances from that poem printed in 'Ériu'.

l. 2257: *Ocht mbliadna sescat, nī scāil, ar nōi cētaib di bliadnaib.*

l. 2453: *Cethrib sostaib slicht 'sind āircc⁴ ō drumlurgain co drumsleit.*

l. 5909: *In tan ba óenmili āig oc Saúl cona slíagaib.*

l. 6141: *Atchūaid Ianuthān ān āig dond rīg rān inna rīgthaig.*

l. 6919: *Don chath chrōdonn rogab greimm, atacomong do óenbēimm⁵.*

l. 7351: *Ocus Geodeon, gnīm ndāna, do burba na mbarbarda.*

Another example is found in 'Laws' IV p. 218:

Aeine ocus satharnd sīr ngnāth do [f]richnam a n[d]ēidenach.

¹ = *do*.

² = *no*.

³ Better *Chonath* as on p. 12, 12, = early Irish *Coneth*, ogam CONETT-.

⁴ That the *a* in *ārc* 'ark', borrowed from Latin *arca*, is long, is proved by numerous rhymes, e.g. *ārc* : *fōentrācht* 2601, : *imrācht* 4209, 5505 &c., *āirc* : *āitt* 2571, 2609, 5158, where Stokes wrongly prints *aillt*.

⁵ *oenbeim* Stokes, wrongly.

IV. *An Old-Irish Poem ascribed to St. Moling.*

The following poem, which has not hitherto been edited or translated, will be found in the Book of Leinster, p. 149a. No other copy is known to me. In it King Moinach of Cashel (i.e. of Munster), a contemporary of Moling's, is praised for his severe punishment of criminals.

Moling .cc.

- 1 *Rochūala la nech lēgas libru:*
intí ances in mbidbaid iss é fessin as bidbu.
- 2 *Rochūala la cech nduine nodléga:*
cech den aric slabrada¹ forrig cin cecha ndēna.
- 3 *Roscribad i lebraib² Dé ní tú romarb, acht is é;*
tucad díles breth³ do chāch, dogoā bethaid nō brāth.
- 4 *Mōinach Casil comdas⁴ ri lasa marbtar drochdōini;*
atā Mumu lais i ssid, rop maith Diā don dagrig.
- 5 *Roansat na drochdōini⁵ o romarbtha a cēil⁶;*
bendacht⁷ for rig rodacroch, ba moch canait a seir⁸.
- 6 *Dia mbad [f]rim contūased ri, ropad ní a chland dia eis,*
drochdōini⁹ lais dochum bāis, ilar dagdōine¹⁰ 'ma meis.
- 7 *Tinmairg na dōini¹¹ trēna, airchis na dōini¹¹ trūaga,*
tol maicc Dé cecha ndēna, iss ē do less, rochūala.

MS. readings: ¹aric slabraid ²alibru ³braith ⁴comadas ⁵drochdoene
⁶ceile ⁷bendacht Crist ⁸seire ⁹drochdaine ¹⁰degdoene ¹¹doene

R.

TRANSLATION.

1 I have heard it said by some one who reads books¹: he who spares a criminal is himself a criminal.

2 I have heard it said by every person who so reads: each one that devises chains quells² crime, whatever he may do.

3 It has been written in the books³ of God, it is not you who has slain but 'tis he; to each one proper judgment⁴ has been given, he chooses life or doom of death.

¹This verse is one syllable short in the original.

²*forrig*, 3. sg. of *forrigim*, a denominative of *forrach*, according to Pedersen

‡ 731. Cf. *ar is galar an forrich* (: *thig*), Lism. L. 4239.

³Or, if a *lebraib* is the true reading, 'out of the books'.

⁴The facsimile has *braith* which may be a late gen. of *brāth*.

4 Moinach of Cashel is a just¹ king by whom evil folk are killed; Munster through him is at peace, may God² be good to the noble king!

5 The evil folk have desisted since their fellows have been killed; a blessing upon the king who has hanged them, they have praised their meal too soon.³

6 If a king would listen to me, his offspring after him would amount to something; let him put evil folk to death, and have a multitude of good people around his table.

7 Keep the strong ones in check, have pity upon the wretched folk, perform the will of God whatever you may do,—that is your true advantage, I have heard it said.

V. *Ancient Irish Poems with sporadic rhyme.*

The following six poems which, with two exceptions, are here critically edited and translated for the first time, seem to belong to a special metrical group in early Irish poetry. Though they employ rhyme in a variety of ways, they do not metrically conform either with the old rhythmical alliterative system, of which I have given some account and examples in “Älteste irische Dichtung” (Berlin, 1913), or with the later syllabizing poetry. End rhyme appears in them in various positions, in couplets either introducing or concluding a varying number of unrhymed lines, or placed in the middle of such lines. In all other respects these poems belong to that class of composition which has developed from rhythmical prose known as *retoric*, the chief characteristics of which are a largely artificial order of words, with occasional tmesis, parallelism, antithesis, word to word alliteration, and rhythmical cadences at the end of periods.⁴

It is noteworthy that four of the poems here printed are quoted as examples of compositions which the aspiring *fili* had to study in the eighth and ninth years of his training. See Thurneysen, *Mittelirische Verslehren*, Ir. T. III p. 49 ff. That alone would seem to show that they constitute a special metrical group. Two other pieces quoted as subjects of study for the ninth year, *cētnad cuirmthige* (p. 51) and *cētnad tige nūi* (p. 52) are examples of *retoric* and do not show any traces of rhyme. Of another it must remain doubtful whether I am right in including it in our group, as only the introductory couplet is extant. This is all the more to be regretted as it is undoubtedly the

¹*comadas* has to be pronounced *comdas*, as in SR 4778.

²Here *Dia*, as often in poetry, has to be read with what is technically called *mallrugud* ‘slowing down’, so that it counts as two syllables. In SR Stokes proposed to insert *dil* wherever *Dia* is so used. That this is unnecessary is proved by l. 2685: *Rodiulísat a nDíā ndil*.

³Literally, ‘it was (too) early they sing their meal’, i.e. they have reckoned without their host.

⁴See on this my essay on Learning in Ireland in the fifth century (Dublin, 1912), p. 13 ff.

oldest among these poems. The form *fēda* for later *fiada*, gen. sing. of *fiad* 'deer', and probably also *fē* for *fiā*, show that it belongs to the seventh century. It is called *cētnad n-imrime* (p. 53), which may be rendered by 'Song on starting for a ride', and may be restored as follows:

Donfē for fēda fē, donfē for machaire macc dūilig Dē
 'May the Son of elemental God lead us on to a land (?) of deer, may He lead us on to a plain'.

An excellent example of the kind of composition described above is the 'prophylactic song of age' or 'prayer for long life' (*cētnad n-āisse*, p. 53), of which I have printed an edition and translation in the 'Miscellany presented to J. M. Mackay' (Liverpool, 1914), p. 226 ff. It is here reprinted for the sake of completeness. I regard it as an originally pagan prayer remodelled by a Christian poet. In both manuscripts in which it has come down to us it is ascribed to Fer fio, whom I would identify with Fer fio macc Fabri, abbot of Conry in Westmeath, who died in 762. The poem is a prayer addressed to pagan divinities for a long life, good fortune and lasting fame. Life is regarded as a journey into the 'Plain of Age' (*mag āessa*), where the traveler is beset by phantoms, ill-omened animals, thieves, women-folk, and armed bands. In addition to such homoioteleuta as the trisyllables in the first and third stanzas we have rhyme in *cel : sen*, *bebe : febe*, in the verses from *richt* to *thecht*, in *buiden : uile*, and finally in *lessa : form-sa*.

- 1 *Admuiniur secht n-ingena*
dolbte snāthi macc n-āesmar.
Trī bās āaim rohucaiter!
trī āes dom dorataiter!
secht tonna tacid dom dorodaiter!
Nīmchollet messe fom chūairt
i llūrig lasrēin¹ cen lēniud!
Nī nascthar mo chlū ar chel!
domthi āes, nīmthi bās corba sen.
- 2 *Admuiniur m' argetnia nad ba nad bebe:*
amser dom doridnastar findruni febe.
Rohorthar mo richt,
rosōerthar mo recht,
romōrthar mo lecht,
nīmthi bās for fecht,
rofirthar mo thecht!

¹The MSS. have *lasrien* and *lasren*. Cf. O'Dav. 1198: *laisrēin .i. lasamain*
nō ālaind nō calma, ut est: trena laeg laisrēin.

*Nimragba nathir díchonn
 nā dorb dūrglass
 nā dōel dīchuinn!
 Nimmüllethar teol
 nā cuire ban nā cuire buiden!
 domthī aurchur n-amsire ó Ríg inna n-uile!*

- 3 *Admuiniur Senach sechtamserach
 conaltar mnā side for bruinnib būais.
 Nī báiter mo sechtchaindel!
 Am dūn dīthogail,
 am aíl anscuichthe,
 am lia lōgmar,
 am sēn sechtmainech.
 Ropo chētach cētbladnach,
 cech cēt dūb ar ūair!
 Cotagaur cucum mo lessa:
 robē rath in spiurto nōib form-sa!
 Domini est salus, ter, Christi est salus, ter.
 Super populum tuum, Domine, benedictio tua.*

TRANSLATION.

- 1 I invoke the seven daughters of the Sea,
 who fashion the threads of the sons of long life.
 May three deaths be taken from me!
 May three periods of age be granted to me!
 May seven waves of good fortune be dealt to me!
 Phantoms shall not harm me on my journey
 in flashing corslet without hindrance.
 My fame shall not perish.
 May old age come to me! death shall not come to me till I
 am old.
- 2 I invoke my Silver Champion who has not died, who will not
 die.
 May a time be granted to me of the quality of white bronze!
 May my double be slain!
 May my right be maintained!
 May my strength be increased!
 Let my grave not be ready!
 Death shall not come to me on an expedition.
 May my journey be carried to the end!
 The headless adder shall not seize me,

nor the hard-grey worm,
 nor the headless black chafer.
 Neither thief shall harm me,
 nor a band of women, nor a band of armed men.
 Let increase of time come to me from the King of the
 Universe!

- 3 I invoke Senach of the seven periods of time,
 whom fairy women have reared on the breasts of plenty.

May my seven candles not be extinguished!

I am an indestructible stronghold,

I am an unshaken rock,

I am a precious stone,

I am the luck of the week.

May I live a hundred times a hundred years,
 each hundred of them apart!

I summon their boons to me.

May the grace of the Holy Spirit be upon me!

Domini est salus (three times), Christi est salus (three times).

Super populum tuum, Domine, benedictio tua [Ps. 3 v. 9].

The next example of this kind of composition is found under the title *reicne roscadach* (l. c. p. 50) in a poem enumerating the prices to which the seven grades of *flid* are entitled for their various metrical compositions. In addition to the manuscripts used by Thurneysen I make use also of the quotations from this poem in 'Ancient Laws' V, p. 58 ff. and by O'Davoren in his Glossary § 476. After fourteen lines ending all except one (l. 3) in unrhymed trisyllables the poem is brought to a close by a couplet with trisyllabic endrhyme. There is alliteration and linking of the lines¹ except between 9/10, 11/12, 12/13. That we have to do with a complete poem is shown by the last word (*anamna*) beginning with the same letter as the first word of the poem (*A*). A poem the first three lines of which are almost identical with those of our poem, but without a rhyming couplet at the end, will be found in the Metrical Treatises p. 31.

A Amorgein ānmoltaig,

ara fēsser mārjuirmib

ferba fīled fēid :

Fuirim sensamaisc

- 5 *ar dēin co ndronchōri.*

¹Notice the links in *sensamaisc* : *ar*, *bānindlōig* : *ar*, *irchōraig* : *cūic*, *mōræatha* : *nad*, and see on this *Alt. Dicht.* I, p. 8.

- Dlig¹ boin mbānindlōig*
ar māin sōir sētruda.
Sais² lulgaig lānmessaib³
ar lēirlōidi lērigter.⁴
 10 *Ech dā bō būlathach,⁵*
lūath a rēimm,⁶ ar ardeamain.⁷
Biaid⁸ bō fo chāinchethair
ar anair n-irchōraig.⁹
Cūic bāe cachā mōrnatha
 15 *nad ēcressa caramna.¹⁰*
Carpāt cumaile cachae¹¹ anamna.

TRANSLATION.

- O most praiseworthy Amorgein,
 that you may know¹² by (their) **great compositions**
 the words of venerable¹³ poets:
 Give an old heifer
 5 for a *dian* with firm symmetry.
 You are entitled to a white in-calf cow
 for the noble treasure of a *sētrud*.¹⁴
 You will obtain¹⁵ a milch cow with full **standards**
 for studious *lōids*¹⁶ that are carefully composed.
 10 A steed of the value of two cows rich in milk,¹⁷
 swift its course, for a lofty *emain*.
 There will be a cow four fair times¹⁸

¹dlig—B bera L, Laws.²Sias B.³lanmesaig Laws.⁴leirlaidh leirigter Laws.⁵sic Laws, bidlatnech L bilfothach B, O'Dav.⁶aireim B airem Laws arenn L a rēimm ego.⁷anairdeamain B ararademain L arairdeamain Laws.⁸bid Laws.⁹ircoraig B urcoraig Laws urchoir L.¹⁰nadecres carbmna B nadicress carn imna curpu caramna .i. imna laedaib
 Laws narptir tressa caramna L nadicress caramna O'D.¹¹cachae B cach aeda L Laws.¹²The quantity of *fēsser* is established by the rhyme with *crēsen*, Féil. Feb. 4.¹³I take *fēid* as the dat. of *fiad* 'respect, welcome'.¹⁴Cp. *mōin sōir sētrotha* in a poem quoted by O'Mulc. § 537 and edited Zur
 Kelt. Wortk. § 56.¹⁵*sais*, 2. sg. s-fut. of *saigim*.¹⁶Cp. *conā lōidib léirib*, Féil. Prol. 333.¹⁷That *bil-lathach* is the right reading is shown by the link with *lūath*; *lathach*
 is an adjective in -ach from *laith* 'milk'.¹⁸i.e. there will be four cows.

for a full melodious *anair*.

Five cows for every great *nath*,

15 whose bodies should not be meager.

A chariot of the value of a slave girl for every *anamain*.

The poem which I place next will be found in the Metrical Treatises p. 51 under the heading *Clethchor cōem*. It consists of a rhymeless section of ten lines, if my division is correct, followed by a quatrain in which the verses of each couplet contain eight syllables with monosyllabic endrhyme. The quatrain is joined by a link (*airide: atlochur*) to the end of the unrhymed section and does not perhaps originally belong to it. As the repetition of the initial letter (*āliu: airide*) shows, the first ten lines form a complete whole.

Āliu tech midchūarta

mīlscothaib fiath fāth :

fossud mainbthech¹ a imbel ngarb² n-ochrach,

blāithi bith³ a chrann mbī,⁴

5 *cōiri a dī ursainn*

irard aircsinech⁵ ar dorus,

lūachid a soillse,⁶

drongel⁷ a chomla,⁸

berrtha⁹ bir a glass,¹⁰

10 *altach a airide.¹¹*

Atlochur techt i tech co rīg,

a fis¹² file¹³ la bunad fīr;¹⁴

do thich i tech doching¹⁵ for lār,

is¹⁶ dīm nī gēbther¹⁷ midchūairt mār.

¹nainbtheach B.

²garb codd.

³bid B.

⁴bhi L. Cf. O'Dav. § 233.

⁵irard codd. naircsinech L naircsinach B.

⁶a soillsi B om. L.

⁷drancel codd.

⁸comla codd.

⁹bertha L berbtha B.

¹⁰glas B.

¹¹adraidi B.

¹²fis B.

¹³fi— codd.

¹⁴a bunad ir L.

¹⁵dosing B.

¹⁶es codd.

¹⁷nimgeibter L.

TRANSLATION.

I wish¹ for a house with a mead-hall,
 a song of welcome² with honeyed words:
 firm and ample its rough edged ambit,
 smooth the beams³ of its thresholds,
 5 symmetrical its two posts,
 lofty and conspicuous in front of the door,⁴
 brilliant its light,
 solid and white⁵ its door valve,
 smooth-shaven the spit of its bolts,
 10 well-jointed its high-seat.
 I desire to go into a house to a king,⁶
 to know him⁷ in very truth:
 from house into house I step upon the ground,
 nor shall a great mead-hall be withheld from me.⁸

The next poem consists of seven short lines, all, except the last two, of unequal structure. The first and third, and the fifth and seventh lines rhyme. There is an almost entire absence of alliteration. The poem, which has for its subject the fort of Rathangan in county Kildare and its former owners, the kings of the Ui Berraidi of Leccach, has come down to us in two copies, in the Book of Leinster p. 314b and in Rawl. B 502, p. 122b 48. It was first printed and translated by me in 'Learning in Ireland' (Dublin, 1913) p. 19.

¹Poems beginning in this manner are common, e.g. *Áiliu iath nĒrenn*, Ir. T. III p. 35; *áiliu laith lam* (leg. *lem*) *co meild maith*, O'Dav. 1218; *áiliu seinm*, ib. 1444; *áiliu Dia*, Laws I p. 10.

²I take *fiath* as gen. pl. of *fiad*. Cf. *co fátha fēith*, Kelt. Wortk. § 56, where I wrongly regarded *fēith* as the dat. of *fēth*.

³Cf. *for foradaib bith isind óenuch*, CZ III p. 216 § 31.

⁴Perhaps we should read *a fordorus* 'its lintel', to which the *n* before *aircsinech* in both MSS. seems to point.

⁵Perhaps the MS. reading *droncel*, which would give alliteration with *comla*, should stand. It might be rendered 'a solid omen' (*dron cēl*).

⁶Cp. *nī fetar citnē brīga mo dul i tech co rīga*, Er. V 20, 3.

⁷Perhaps we should read *a fis filed* 'by the knowledge of a poet'.

⁸Cf. *nī gabthar dīm dul cech conair is āil dam*, CZ III 33, 18. *nī gēbam dīi tri forneri*, T Ferbe 832. The spelling *es* for *is* is meant to mark the non-palatal character of *s*. It is common also with the scribe of Harl. 5280. See CZ III 456, 13. 448, 3.8. 452, 10.17.

Clann Óengusa Berraidi Húi Berraidi oc¹ Leccuck, de quibus Berchán cecinit ic Ráith Imgāin:

*Ind ráith i comair in dairfeda,²
ba Bruidgi, ba Cathaíl,
ba Aeda, ba hAílella,
ba Conaing, ba Cuilíni,
5 ocus ba Máele-Dúin.
Ind ráith dar éis cáich³ ar úair,⁴
is ind rig foait⁵ i n-úir.*

TRANSLATION.

The fort over against the oakwood,
it was Bruidge's, it was Cathal's,
it was Aed's, it was Ailill's,
it was Conaing's, it was Cuiline's,
5 and it was Mael-Duin's—
the fort remaining after each one's in turn,
and the kings' asleep in the ground.

Lastly I put here also the introductory prayer from Amra Choluimb Chille, which though none of its editors have noticed it, consists of two stanzas with end-rhyme, while the rest of the Amra is composed in rhythmical alliterative prose. Three of its lines resolve themselves easily into a metrical scheme of 10 (or 5+5) + 4 syllables,⁶ to which the last, if we throw out *firiēn* and read *cluínethar* instead of *cluines*, would conform. There is monosyllabic end-rhyme (*nēit: mēit, dēr: nēl*) and the last four syllables of each line are joined to the preceding section by links (*gnuis: cula, ēgthiar: ar, theintide: diuderec, donuāil: de*). That the prefatory prayer stands apart from the Amra itself is shown by the last words *nū discōil* repeating the beginning of the latter, and not of the former. At the same time the introduction is joined

¹o R.

²diruda L.

³deis cach rig R.

⁴iarnuair L.

⁵7 na sluaig foait R 7 na rig ronfoat L.

⁶'after each king' R.

⁷'and the hosts', R. *sluaig* would give internal rhyme with *úair*.

⁸*nīmreilge i llurgu* is to be read with synizesis.

to the body of the poem (*corp ind immuin*) by an alliterative link (*nēl : nī*).

Zimmer had arrived at the conclusion that the *Amra* is actually what it pretends to be, a composition of the end of the sixth century, and pending a minute linguistic investigation there is, I think, much to be said in favor of his opinion. The entire absence of the mention of miracles is one point. If none of the manuscripts exhibit such archaic forms as we might expect, e.g. *ō* for later *ūa*, *ē* for *īa* and the like, that may be due to their being all derived from one archetype written and partly remodelled during the eighth or a later century. It is greatly to be regretted that all the editors of the poem, O'Beirne Crowe, Atkinson and Stokes, have based their interpretation throughout on the worthless and often silly native glosses, which were written at a time when the language of the *Amra* was no longer understood. These should be wholly set aside and an attempt be made to interpret the poem from our own knowledge. When e.g. in the quatrain printed below all editors have followed the glossator in translating *diudercc* by 'long look', as if it were a compound of Lat. *diu* and Ir. *dercc*, they have not considered the rhyme *diudercc : diupert* which they all quote (e.g. RC XX p. 156) and which proves that the *d* of *dercc* is not lenited, as it would be in such a compound. To clinch the matter there is the spelling *diutercc* in LH, and thus it is likely that we have to do with a compound *di-ud-dercc* as I proposed in my 'Contributions.' The word seems to scan as three syllables. Again, the translators adopt the explanation of the glosses in rendering the word *axal* by 'conversation' or taking it as the name of an angel, while it should in all passages be translated by 'approach' or 'visit', being the verbal noun of *ad-com-sel*, as *tōxal* is of *to-fo-com-sel*, &c.

Among undoubted marks of great age Zimmer has mentioned the use of *re n-* 'before' as a conjunction, instead of the later *resiu*. Other such marks are the passive ending *-thiar* in i-verbs, the use of *nu* in the sense of 'now', and the occurrence of the substantive verb in certain functions where in the later language the copula is used, as e.g. *bōi sab sūithe* 'he was a prop of knowledge', or *bōi ūath fri demal* 'he was a terror to the Devil'. This is also the case in other very ancient compositions, such as the prophecy of Moccu Mugairni to Eochaid Fūath nAirt in Rawl. B 502, p. 125a, where we have *biait betha airchinn* 'they

will be chieftains of the world', or *biat oirddnidi oircnig ollamnaig* 'they will be exalted, destructive, masterly'.

- 1 *Dia Dia dorrogus re tias inna gnūis* *culu tre nēit.*
Dia nime nīmreūge i llurgu i n-ēgthiar *ar mūichthea mēit.*
 2 *Dia mār m' anacul¹ de muir theintidiu,²* *diudercc³ ndēr,*
Dia firien firoeus cluinethar⁴ mo donuail⁵ *de nemīath⁶ nēl.*

TRANSLATION.

- 1 God, God, let me beseech Him ere I go into His presence
 through chariots of battle.⁷
 The God of Heaven shall not let me into lands where there is
 outcry on account of the greatness of the smothering.⁸
 2 Great God is my protection from the fiery sea,⁹ a tearful sight.
 The just, truly-near God hears my wail¹⁰ from the heaven-land
 of clouds.

¹sic LH mo anacul cett.

²mur theintide codd.

³diutercc LH.

⁴cluines codd.

⁵donuail LU donuail R.

⁶nimiath var.

⁷Here the poet compares the host of demons attacking the soul as it departs from the body to battle-chariots through which he has to pass. As to the artificial order of words, compare *guin iar Lugdach* 'after the slaying of Lugaid', in a ninth century poem in LL p. 51b.

⁸*māchad* is the ordinary word for the smothering smoke of hell fire. Cf. e.g. *formāchad inna ngnūise* (in hell), Tenga Bithnūa § 120; *is dē do māchad*, Ér. III 7, 4.

⁹Though all the MSS. have *mur theintide* the reference is evidently to the fiery sea of hell. Cf. e.g. *muir tened impu connice a smecha*, FA. § 25; *a muir tuilbrēn teintide*, Ér. III 30 § 15.

¹⁰*donuail* f., with IE. *u* preserved, later *donāl*. Cf. *donāla co ndilochta dochum nime nēl*, Ér. II 54 § 5. In *donāl chon cendaid co cert*, Laud 615, p. 138 it denotes the wailing howl of a dog.

VI. Philological Notes.

1. Old-Ir. *dú* f. 'earth, ground, place'.

So few examples of the declensional forms of this word have hitherto been collected that the following will be a welcome addition to Pedersen's list in § 52 of his Grammar. Accusative: *rōinfid fuil fene fo don*, TBC ed. Wind. p. 405; *assolcus don do chētnad Chrīst* 'I have opened a place to an inaugural song of Christ', Ir. T. III p. 51, 20. Genitive: *foichle ōcu aladon*¹ 'beware of the warriors of a foreign land!' Anecd. I p. 13, 7. Dative:

*a ben ucut, nā fer mol frisin*² *marb dochūaid do don*,³
'O woman yonder, make no praise for the dead man that has gone to earth'.

2. Old-Ir. *comram* m. 'contest'.

In § 798 of his Comparative Grammar Pedersen hesitatingly suggests that this word may contain an earlier form of the verbal noun that goes with *riad-*. I would prefer to look upon it as a compound of *rām* 'the act of rowing', so that its original meaning would be 'competitive rowing, a rowing race'. Compare the similar development in the meaning of *cumleng* 'contest', originally 'competitive leaping'.

3. O. Ir. *mōr-fairgge* f. 'great ocean'.

J. Loth has endeavored to equate an assumed *mōrfairgge* with the Welsh *mererydd*. There is however no such Irish word. We have to do with a compound with *mōr* coined for the purpose of getting alliteration with *muir*, with which the word is always found coupled, e.g. *i crāes mara 7 mōrfairgge*, CZ X 410, 9; *a mbēl mara 7 mōrfairrge*, Misc. K. Meyer p. 313 § 3; ib. § 4 &c.

4. O. Ir. *fīrinne* f. 'truth, righteousness'.

Thurneysen Handb. § 908 would explain the *nn* of this word as due to the influence of a popular connexion with *inne* f. 'sense'. A simpler explanation may be found in the law discovered by John MacNeill, according to which *n* in unstressed syllables is doubled when an *r* (or *l*) precedes it.

¹*alladon* MS.

²*forsin* var.

³Wrongly divided and rendered by the editor.

5. O. Ir. *cūach* m. 'a cup'.

Stokes¹ and others have repeatedly connected this word with Lat. *caucus* &c. either as a cognate or loan. Against this I pointed out that the word is always disyllabic in O. Irish poetry.² I regard it as a derivative in *-ach* from the adjective *cūa* 'hollow', the oldest form of which is *caue* (*ceppān caue crīn ndaro* 'a hollow withered block of oak', Anecl. II 17 § 10) cognate with Lat. *cavus* &c., so that it originally denotes a *Hohlgefäß*. As the word is masculine some noun of that gender has to be understood.

6. O. Ir. *su-astir*.

The facsimile of the Book of Leinster p. 4b 12 reads *ba suastin mo sét*. Here we should clearly emend to *suastir*, an adjective meaning 'having a pleasant journey', so that we may translate 'my road was that of a pleasant journey'.

7. O. Ir. *ēl-ap* 'divine ruler'.

This curious word is a compound of Hebrew *ēl* 'God' and Ir. *ap*, a loan from Lat. *abbas*. It occurs in the following stanza quoted in the Metrical Treatises (Ir. T. III p. 57) in illustration of the metre *ocktfoelach*:

*Fiachra, fer na fēle,
cotgaib triathblai ar thrēne,
gass gel co ngrūaid grēne,
dian³ lān Ere⁴ ard;
Gērat⁵ glūair co nglaine,
ēlap⁶ slūaig co saine,
conid minn cach maige,
balc buile na mbard.*

'Fiachra, generous man, who holds the lordly land together by strength, a bright scion with sunny cheek, of whom' illustrious Erin is full;

¹See e.g. Ir. T. III p. 226.

²It is still scanned as such in the tenth century, e.g. SR 6388, 6390.

³dia L.

⁴heriu L. eri B.

⁵gerait L.

⁶ēlaip L.

⁷i.e. of whose fame.

Brilliant champion with splendor, divine ruler of a distinguished host, so that he is the diadem of every plain, the strong shelter of the bards'.

As the highest rank in the ancient Irish Church was that of the abbot (not of the bishop), the word *ap* is commonly applied to kings and all other high dignitaries, the Pope is called *ap Rōma* 'abbot of Rome' and God *ap nīme* 'abbot of Heaven', or *ap archaīngel* 'the abbot of archangels', Ér. III, Cormac's Rule § 46. In a poem following immediately upon ours we find the compound *apad-māl* 'lordly prince' in rhyme with *Matudān*.

As the rhymes *grēne* : *Ēre, glaine* (dat.) : *maige* : *buīle* show, our poem cannot be much earlier than the eleventh century. For the sake of the rhyme *bīle* 'a sheltering tree' is spelt *buīle*. Cf. Kelt. Wortk. § 121.

8. O. Ir. *rig-dūn* 'royal fort'.

It is always interesting to find in Irish an exact parallel of some wellknown Gaulish or old-British compound. Such a one is *rigdūn*, Tochm. Ferbe l. 838, answering exactly to Ptolemy's *Πρυδάουον*.

9. O. Ir. *cet* 'it is permitted, permission'.

In my 'Keltische Wortkunde', § 102 I contended that this was not a native Irish word and explained it as a shortening of Lat. *licet*. I believe my proposal has not found much favor among Irish scholars. And yet it must stand; for it is established by the occurrence in very old texts of the fuller form in the same use and function. The following instances have become known to me: *riagol in Choimded in so, is licet cia nospromae*, Ér. I 202 § 29 (old metrical rule); *air is lecet du sudīb erbert bith &c.*, Ml. 69a 23; *is licet doaīb*, Ér. VII 140 § 3; *is liceth doaīb*, ib.; *is licet dó praind*, ib. 150 § 19.

10. Old-Irish nouns in **-ntī-*.

In Kelt. Wortk. §§ 108 and 109 I added two further instances of this formation to those already known, viz. *genit* 'a laughing sprite' and *gelit* 'a leech'. There are still many others. As Cormac in his Glossary hit upon the correct explanation of *birit* (§ 139), so I think he is right also in his etymology of *binit* f. 'rennet' when he says (§ 125): *benaid in n-as co mbī tiug .i. tēcht* 'it strikes the milk so that

it turns thick, i.e. coagulated'. In § 140 he spells the word *benit* in order to substantiate his fanciful derivation of the tribal name *Bentraige*.

Another word of the same origin is *scinnit* f. 'kernel', derived from *scenn-*, *scinn-* 'to leap or jump forth', so that it originally denotes that which breaks forth from the fruit. The nom. plur. occurs in Tenga Bithnūa § 52: *leca lōgmara scinniti a thoraíd* 'the kernels of its fruit were precious stones'.

Two diminutives in *-ān* also belong to this group. One of them, *giritān*, glossed by *faochain mara* 'periwinkles' (Corm. § 730), is derived from *ger-* 'to heat, inflame, burn', because they sting or inflame when touched or eaten; the other, *mūlgitān* 'sweetbread' (ib. § 860), comes from *mēlg-* in an intransitive sense, 'to produce milk'.

11. O. Ir. *fonnam* m. 'palpitation'.

Both Cormac (§ 122, Transl. p. 159) and O'Davoren (§ 848) quote from some old text the phrase *i fonnam mo thuirc*, which Cormac explains as *i foglūasacht mo chridi* 'in the agitation of my heart'. I take *fonnam* to stand for *fo-snām*. For *snām* 'the act of swimming' denotes generally any rhythmical movement, such as the flight of birds (*snām sebaic* 'a hawk's flight', in Ir. T. III p. 12 the name of a metre), the peculiar shambling gait of the wolf (*fāelsnam*¹, Cath Catharda, l. 1832), &c. So *fonnam* here denotes the rhythmical movement of the heart, 'palpitation'.

12. O. Ir. *rodbo* 'or'.

In his Handbuch § 874 Thurneysen is doubtful whether O. Ir. *rodbo*, literally 'may be', can be used to introduce the second element of a disjunctive phrase. He gives only one example from Wb 14c 24, *rodbo chosmūius*, which he rightly translates 'or (it is) a simile'. Here is another from Laws IV 340, 1: *dligthir brethim la rig rodbo brithim cadesin* 'it is obligatory that a king should have a judge, or that he be a judge himself'.² In Anecd. III 64, 8 *rodbo o littrīb nō o himacallmaib* 'whether it be from letters or from conversations' we have the usual construction.

¹I have met *Fōilnam* also as a personal name, but have mislaid the reference. It answers to the French *Pas-de-loup* and the German *Wolfgang*, of which latter J. Grimm gave such a fanciful explanation, while it simply denotes a man with a peculiar gait resembling that of the wolf.

²Not 'though he is himself a judge', as the editor translates.

13. Ir. *mac samla*, *macsamail* 'one's like, fellow'.

In his 'Bidrag til det norske sprogs historie i Irland' (Kristiania, 1915), p. 40, Marstrander regards the first element in the wellknown expression *macasamla*, mod. *macasamhail*, as borrowed from O. N. *maka*, the oblique case of *maki* 'match, fellow'. This is not a new proposal, and it has already been combated by the late L. C. Stern in *Zeitschr.* IV. 185. Marstrander himself has some misgivings, for, as he rightly says, *maka* ought to have given *maga* in mod. Irish. However, he attempts to explain the retention of *k* by assuming that it was preserved by the following *s*.

The truth is that we have to do with a peculiar and old native mode of expression, in which *mac* 'son, boy' is used in a way that reminds one of similar expressions in oriental languages.¹ Zimmer would probably have classed it with others which he has enumerated in *Zeitschr.* IX p. 110 as of non-Aryan origin.

The idiom assumes a variety of forms, the oldest of which seems to have been *mac* *samla* 'son of likeness', where *samla* is the gen. sing. of a feminine noun *samla*.² That we have not originally to do with a compound is clear from the use of the phrase in poetry, where *samla* counts as a separate word in rhyme and alliteration. A few instances will suffice. In a poem from Rawl. B 502, printed in *Zeitschr.* III p. 23, 29 we read:

noco tarla dam co se mac samla na crichi-se

'there has not hitherto come to me the like of this raid'. Here *samla* rhymes with *tarla*. In the following line from Toehm. Ferbe 653 it rhymes with *targa*:

or nī tharga is nīr gein a mac samla asin Chrūachain

'for there will not come nor has there been born one like him out of Cruachu'. In Salt. na Rann l. 7007 (*mac samla Solman*) it alliterates with *Solman*, and ib. l. 5367 with *sain*.

The next stage in the development of the phrase is that it came to be felt as a compound, but without lenition of the *s*, as would have been the case in a genuine compound. Thus we have not only *do mac-samla*, TBC 4053 (ed. Wind.) and *macsamla Conchobuir*, ib. 875, but *id a macsamla* 'a withe like it', ib. 612, *mēla a macsamla* 'a disgrace

¹Stern, l.c. has drawn attention to this and given examples from Irish, to which we may add *mac* *meda* 'son of mead' Anecd. II 35 §8, i.e. a heavy drinker of mead; *mac* *na trāth*, i.e. one who keeps the canonical hours strictly; *mac* *míraith* 'son of disgrace'.

²In Salt. na Rann l. 3821 we should read:

Rī dorat sain fri samlai do Mōisi do mac Amrai. Cf. l. 4638: *fri samlai sōergrāid*.

like it', ib. 648 &c. In the last instance the Stowe MS. reads *a macasamla*, which shows that *mac a samla* 'her like' or 'their like' had become petrified. A good example of this is *nī raibī isin domhun mhnāi a maccasamla* 'there was not in the world a woman like her', TTr.² l. 370.

Now by the side of these forms we find *macsamail*, which is used exactly like *samail* by itself, as e.g. *nī tainic samail a delba son*, Ir. T. III p. 186, 1, or *nī fūair a samail di graig*, Sergl. Conc. 37. And lastly we get *macasamail*, which is to be explained like *macasamla* above.

14. A genitive construction in Irish poetry.

Editors and translators of old- and middle-Irish texts, I myself among the number, have often misunderstood and misrendered an idiomatic genitive construction, of which the early poets are particularly fond. I have drawn attention to it in 'Älteste Dichtung' I p. 56 § 3, in a note on the line

cāinlāech Luigdech lārtha iath

'L.' was a fine warrior for² laying waste lands'.

In 'Hail Brigit' p. 14, l. 1, I did not see that we have the same construction in *im chúail claideb cumtaig drend* which should be rendered 'around a shock of swords for making battle'. Here *cumtaig* is the gen. sg. of *cumtach*, and the supposed nom. *cumtaig* which I give in my 'Contributions' and which Stokes registers in the Index to *Saltair na Rann* is a vox nihili. In the same way the entries *aurdaig* (*irdaig*) are in all cases genitives of *aurdach*. That Stokes did not at the time understand the construction is also shown by his separating it from the context by the insertion of a comma, as in l. 3685 *for cel clúithi cin*, and l. 5863 *sciath clóithi bann*, where *clóithi* is the gen. of *clóud* (*clód*); or in l. 5135 *in cethramad gnímráid gráid* &c.

15. O. Ir. *legam* m. 'moth'.

This word, which Cormac in his Glossary § 799 fancifully connects with *lig*- 'to lick', is more likely a noun of the agent in *-am* (*-em*, see Thurn. Handb. § 268) from *leg-* (trans.) 'to dissolve'. *Sírem*, another word of the same formation, seems to be the name for some parasitic animal, perhaps a kind of louse. It comes from *sir-* 'to search, visit, invade', as Cormac rightly explains: *tarsinnī síres ó luc do luc in capite et in toto corpore*. It is possible though that it may be the name

¹Though in the note I took *Luigdech* as the gen. sing. of *Lugaid*, used idiomatically, it is possible that it may be a nominative form, of which *Luigthig* (Anecd. III 57, 4&c.) is the genitive.

²Literally, 'of'.

of some skin disease: for O'Clery registers a gloss *sireamh .i. galar no tinneas*.

16. O. Ir. *lētiu* f. 'act of daring'.

This is the verbal noun of *ro-lamur* 'I dare'. See Thurn. Handb. § 728. It occurs in the following quotation in O'Dav. § 1196, which Stokes has not translated: *lēt .i. linge, ut est rolēt lētenaib nithu ar maigrīb ēccne* 'with daring deeds he dared conflicts upon steads of need'. The old preterit passive *rolēt* is here used in an active sense instead of *rolāmair*, just as *rocēt* and *rodēt* in the later language take the place of *rocechuin* and *rodāmair*.

17. O. Ir. *bordgal* 'a famous resort'.

In my essay on Learning in Ireland in the fifth century p. 11, I suggested that the place-name *Bordgal* in West Meath, which is the Irish form of *Burdigala*, now Bordeaux, may have been that of a settlement of fugitive scholars from Gaul. Whether that is so or not, the name and fame of *Burdigala* as a great center of learning and resort of students were so well known in ancient Ireland that *bordgal* became a general term for any famous place to which people resorted in large numbers. In that sense it is repeatedly used in Féilire Oingusso. Thus Ephesus is called *ān bordgal* (Dec. 27), and in Epil. 253 the same phrase refers, not as Stokes took it, to St. Peter, but to *drong nōebepscop Rōmae*, so that we may render by 'gathering, assembly'. In Prol. 71
a rrūama cen tāde it bordgala mīle
means that their graveyards were meeting places or the goal of pilgrimage of thousands. The gen. occurs in Prol. 275:
bendacht cecha bordgal fort ordan, a Isu.

18. O. Ir. *anamthach* n. 'soul-flight'.

In Ériu III p. 35 Stokes doubtfully suggested that such might be the meaning of this rare word, though he erroneously wrote 'seelenflug' instead of 'seelenflucht'. I think that he was right and that we have to do with a compound, the second part of which (*-tach*) is the verb noun of *techim* 'I flee' in the form which it assumes in composition, as in *attach* n. 'refuge'. The dative occurs in the phrase *oc anamduch* in Ériu II 120, 4, which answers to *ria mbās*, ib. l. 1. O'Clery's *anamthaigh .i. anbáthadh* is either the gen. sg. excerpted from some old text, or belongs to a period when the old neuter had become feminine.

A word of similar meaning is *tig-anāl* f. 'last breath', which I mention here because in the translation of Cormac's Glossary, p. 5

O'Donovan and Stokes have misrendered it. It was the name given to certain utterances of Morann mac Möin before his death (*isin tris tiganáil Morainn*, Corm. § 1196).

19. Impersonal constructions in Irish.

In his edition of TBC 1.4165 Windisch reads against the MS.: *go roich Fer Diad issinn áth*, taking *Fer Diad* as the subject. But the MS. reading, *Fer nDiad*, should stand and the rendering should be 'until it comes to F. D. in the ford'. It is a construction like *bec co bás Illainn cach nā* (Anecd. I 29 § 33) 'all is trifling till it comes to Illann's death', i.e. in comparison with his death; or *aithech cāch co hEogan hūais* (CZ VI 299, 35) 'every one is a boor in comparison with noble Eogan'.

In the same way editors have often mistaken and misrendered the impersonal construction *dorigní (derna) de*, literally 'it made of him' i.e. 'it made, turned or changed him', as e.g. *co nderna sruth sainemáil dī* (Anecd. II 2, 5) 'it turned her into a beautiful river' or 'she was turned', &c. In Zeitschr. III 218 § 27 read *co nderna bruth óir de* with the MS. When Pokorny, in discussing the sentence *co nderna nōeb dīn macclēriuch* 'so the young cleric became a saint' in Misc. K. Meyer, p. 215, says '*dogniu . . dī* wird intransitiv gebraucht in der Bedeutung 'ich werde zu'', he misses the point by substituting a personal for an impersonal construction.

20. O. Ir. *nau*, *nō* 'nine times'.

In his edition of O'Davoren's Glossary § 547 Stokes prints *cusin nómad n-ó*, but does not translate. We should read *nó* and render 'to the nine times ninth'. An older form is *nau* in Audacht Morainn (LL 294 a): *dofechar ó Dia co nómad nau* 'it is punished by God to the nine times ninth (degree)'.

21. Mid. Ir. *franc-amus* 'a Gaulish mercenary'.

In Rev. Celt. XIV p. 426 Stokes took the first part of this compound to be cognate with or as a loan from O. N. *frakkr* 'strong' or O. Welsh *franc* 'a youth'. It is however the national name *Franc* 'a Frank', which after the conquest of France by that people took the place of the earlier *Gall* in Irish terminology, as I have pointed out in 'Learning in Ireland', p. 24 note 25. The reference is to mercenaries from Gaul in the service of Irish kings, on which see Ériu IV p. 208. They are mentioned as *Gaill comlaind caithigthe* in Laws IV p. 340 (Críth Gablach), and as *Frangcaigh fognama (fochama MS.)* in Ir. T. III 91 § 128.

VII. Notes on Irish texts.

1. K. Meyer, *Über die älteste irische Dichtung* (Berlin, 1913).

On p. 18 § 21 we should read with the MS.: *bar Eirc bāadaig bāaidrī* and render 'son of victorious Erc, a triumphant king'.

On p. 40 § 19 instead of *ētnu* the MS. has *Bretnu*, so that 'Stirnen' on p. 44, 2 should be altered into 'Britten'. Ib. § 13 read with the MS.: *dagrig domuin dōensius*, and translate 'the noble kings of the world, he made vassals of them'.

In § 22 it should have been stated that the MS. reads *flainn* instead of *flann*.

In § 50 the MS. has *dōene dōengein*, and in § 44 instead of *Aboth Aor* the reading of the MS. is *boath abor*.

In § 46 instead of *cathmīl* the MS. has *cathmīlid*.

On p. 54 § 13 instead of *cath* R has correctly *ūath*.

On p. 59, l. 17 for *fedba* read *febda* with the MS.

On p. 60, l. 15 the reading of R is *cautma in caem*.

2. Stokes' edition of *Félire Oengusso* (Henry Bradshaw Society).

In the Corrigenda to this edition p. 472 Stokes proposed to translate a *hÉre* wherever it occurs in the text by 'oh Ireland!' as he had actually done under July 24. It was an unfortunate afterthought. In all cases it means 'out of Ireland' as the phrase is correctly rendered under July 31 and Sept. 5. Under July 24 the context is:

Mad toich duit a hÉre dot chobair cing báge

which should be translated 'If thou hast a natural right to a champion of battle from Ireland to aid thee'. Here the *duit* and the following *táthut* refer to the Irish reader, whom the poet repeatedly addresses, as e.g. in Prol. 297, where we should read *do intliucht* 'thy understanding' instead of Stokes' *dointliucht* 'bad understanding'.

Prol. 135: *nicon jess na romar ainm naich hé for talam*.

Here Stokes renders *na romar* by 'nor very great', taking *na* as *nā*, while it is the neuter of *nach* 'any'. The phrase *na romar* here means 'to any great extent'. Another example will be found in CZ V p. 501: *co mbātar ulli asdig 7 nīrgabsat na romor don tig* 'and they did not take up any great space of the house'. In the Index s.v. *romar* Stokes mixes up *romōr* Jan. 31 with *romar*.

Jan. 16: *Cráibdig i féil Fursai frisrocabsat rige trí míli &c.* Here Stokes takes *cráibdig* as an attribute to *Fursai* and renders 'On the feast of Fursa the Pious', while it is nom. pl. referring to the subject *trí míli*. Similar constructions SR 346 (*dúir imthimchellat*) and 6909 (*glérdin rofersat in cath*).

Feb. 1. Read *Brigit bán, balc n-úalann*. So also Feb. 13: *brigach n-úalann*, Sept. 26: *conid hé, án n-úalann*, and Nov. 29: *ba cáin mind, már n-úalann*. In all cases we have to do with a noun *úalann*.

Jul. 10. For *sostan* read *sestan* with .F.

Aug. 9. Here Stokes reads:

féil Beóáin maicc Nessáin nuíll, ní hattach bílle.

But instead of *nuíll* the best MSS (R, LB, F) have *noll*, which is the correct reading. *Noll* or *nall* has here the force of an exclamation, a use of which I have given examples in the Index Verborum to 'Fianai-gecht'.

Aug. 12. Read *mochthai* in rhyme with *sochlai*. The poet uses both *mochthae* and *mochtae*, the latter rhyming with *gortae* Dec. 2.

Oct. 23. Read *tóebán álaínd Isu*.

Under Dec. 22 Stokes renders *nad labrae* by 'which is not speech'. It should be 'which is not arrogant', literally 'of arrogance'; for *labrae* is the gen. sg. of *labrae* f., the abstract noun of *labur* 'haughty, arrogant, presumptuous', used of speech also in Sergl. Conc. § 26: *ní fres-nesea co labur* 'thou shalt not answer haughtily'. For the construction cp. *nad athbi*, Apr. 15, Aug. 12.

Epil. 165. Read: *am ráth-sa dia ráith-sium*

'I am a guarantor on his behalf'.

Stokes prints *raith* and thinks of a connexion with *rath* 'grace', but the length of the *a* is borne out among other things by the quantitative assonance with *día*, *gūa* and *bía*.

Epil. 466. Here Stokes prints in violation of the metre *it riched úlrathach*. Read with LB, C, F, B *i rathach*, where *rathach* is a derivative of *rath* 'grace'. Translate 'into Thy kingdom, into grace'.

Epil. 472. Instead of *ginol* 'maw' read *ginöl*. The word occurs in SR 5899 in rhyme with *tinöl*, is a compound of *gin* and *öl*, and denotes a voracious ingurgitation.

3. Saltair na Rann, ll. 8389 ff.

In his 'Verbal System of Saltair na Rann' p. 8, Strachan makes the remark that the last stanza of the poem points to its having been composed in the tenth century. He must have in some way misunderstood the context or only glanced at it superficially. The lines in question read as follows:

*Adftadat ind ecnaide¹ do rēir na riagla qs mōō,
imriadat co hettlaide¹ mīli bliadna 'sind lōō.*

'The learned relate according to the rule that is greatest that a thousand years pass² wearily in the day'.

The reference here is to the Day of Judgment, to which the notion repeatedly expressed in the Bible "that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years" (2 Pet. III 8) is applied by the Irish poet.

4. Lucius Gwynn's edition of O'Hartagan's poem on Brugh na Bóinne. (Ériu VII, p. 219 ff.)

In § 1 for *lucht na déine*, *samaíl sneid* read *lucht nā dēine sādail snēid* 'folk that do not practise trivial sloth'.

In § 3 read *seirc* in rhyme with *meicc*. In poetry, where we can control it by rhyme, the Mid. Ir. form *meicc* for O. Ir. *maicc* first makes its appearance towards the end of the tenth century. In *Saltair na Rann*, however, the poet always uses *maicc*, though the twelfth century scribe writes *meicc*. Thus in l. 6604 it rhymes with *aircc*.

In § 4 read *frithseirc* in rhyme with *fichit*.

§ 8. Read *fathrucud*, *feōil* [*is*] *fīn*, where the first two words rhyme with *brathchocor beōil*.

§ 9. Read *rī in braga bricc* 'king of the speckled malt' and cp. e.g. *co torchair Aed in braga*, Rawl. B 502, 165a 27.

§ 11. Read *Bale i mbid Dagda* and cp. §§ 16 and 18.

§ 18. Read *Dafēta* and *ba[d]bda*.

§ 22. Read *a chind coisc na crich*.

§ 23. Read *Rotbia*.

§ 24. Here *druī* is still used as a disyllable, so that the insertion of *ba* is unnecessary.

§ 27. Read *Ma tic*.

§ 32. Read *bra[i]ss*. The MS. reading *dfiss* is untenable as palatal *s* is required in rhyme with *riss*. But perhaps the dot over *f* is meant to cancel the letter, for we should undoubtedly read *diss* 'insignificant' in alliteration with *duine*.

§ 39. Read *gla[i]ss*.

§ 44. Read *sunna* for *messair macc rig*.

§ 47. Instead of *ar Midir riss* read *ar Midir mass* as in § 50. We thus get both alliteration and rhyme with *tast*.

§ 64. Read *noco derna Rī na rūn* 'the King of mysteries has never created'.

§ 68. Instead of *rān* read *rēil* in rhyme with *fēin*.

¹No mark of length in the MS.

²Literally, 'ride about'.

§ 78. Read: *āes na mnā cialla co docht* (: *corp*). Here *cialla* stands for *ciallda*.

5. E. J. Gwynn's edition of 'An Irish Penitential'.
(Ériu VII p. 121 ff.)

- P. 133, l. 13, read *fēūib nōemb* 'on festivals of saints' with the MS.
P. 138 c, read *fursi dochraithe* and translate 'shameless scurrility'.
Cp. *menma sochraithe co nglaine comlabra*, CZ III 25, 32.
Ib. d, read *congbaide[t]u* and *fosta fri anfostaí*.
Ib. e, read *imcaisiu* ('imm-ad-cisiu').
P. 140 § 2, read *banscāl*, and restore the neuter forms throughout the text.
Ib. § 4, *pax maith brāthre* 'bonam pacem fratrum'.
P. 144 § 18 read *cen [f]orchlisin*.
Ib. § 23 read *hi ginu banscāl* 'in ora mulierum'.
Ib. § 30 read a [n]-*aicneth*. *tosnī* should not be rendered 'comes to them', as the editor does in the notes, but 'impels them' (*to-sni*, v. n. *tuinnem*).
P. 146 § 3 read *mor[t]chiund* and *mor[t]chend*. The MS. reading *cailech cerc* needs no emendation. *Cailech* 'cock' denotes the male of various birds, as e.g. *cailech lachan* 'a drake'.
P. 154, l. 5, notice the spelling *nuigen* for *nōiden*, 'quasi modo geniti'.
P. 158, § 21, read *airi[g] nduālcha* 'chief sin'.
P. 162, § 7, for *mamma* read *nammā*.
P. 164, b, read *duiniorcain*.
P. 166, § 4, for *acuachiunn* read *arachiunn* 'by lying in wait for him'. Here the copyist mistook the compendium for *ar* as *q* = *cu*.
Ib. § 5, for *ronoirnecht* read *rodnort nech*, and translate 'if any one has killed himself'.
P. 168 § 11, for *ancarait craibdig* read *anmcharait chrāibdig*.
Ib. § 12, for *ic a guitheth* read *danguided* 'let him beg his pardon' as in § 13.

6. Miscellaneous Texts.

In Thes. Pal. II p. 306, 5 there is no occasion to alter *nachanbēra* into *nachanmēra*, as the editors propose. *Comairche nachanbēra* means 'a safeguard that will not carry us off' viz. into captivity.

In 'Ancient Laws' I p. 16 read *a[r] rosiacht recht aicnid mar nad roacht recht litri*, where the edition has *rochat* instead of *roacht*.

Ibid., p. 134, read:

*Secht sēoit airech, ēraim n-arg,
fognait enech, linaib learg.*

In 'Imram Brain' § 63 *ar nā tuinsed nech diib a tīr* ought to have been rendered 'that none of them should step upon the land'. Here *tuinsed* is the 3d sg. of the past subjunctive of *donessa*. Cp. *ro thunsetar Bretnu*, literally 'they trampled upon the British', Anecd. III p. 66, l. 28.

In Zeitsch. VIII p. 119 § 36 read *gegnatar ann trī* (*tria* MS.) *gniāid*.

In Windisch's edition of TBC l. 3097 read *srōl santbrecc*, to rhyme with *gargnert* and *arget*, and translate 'satin as variegated as one may desire'.

Ibid., l. 3987 the debide rhyme demands that we should read *in rūad rinnech* (: *crōlindech*).

In Tenga Bithnūa § 94 read with the MS. *cosin ciul trejūlnech*. Stokes altered into *trejūltech*, but the form with *n* may stand, as, like *blatnech*, *nemnech* &c. it is modelled upon adjectives where the *n* is radical, e.g. *meirtnech*.

In Zeitsch. III p. 39, l. 21 read *Grigoir ōthā Taibri* 'Gregory from the Tiber', where the MS. wrongly has *tairbri*.

In Ériu I p. 22, l. 111 read:

*nī bfūaradar dhā mnāibh grāidh
acht oirdnid dubha tōiteāin.*

Instead of *grāidh* the MS. has *ghrádhach*. The editor alters into *grādmnāibh*, which the metre forbids.

In LL p. 3b in the fourth stanza of Gilla Cōemāin's poem read:

tall ina clār, adba is cet, cethri lānamna fichet.

The MS. wrongly reads *da cēt* instead of *fichet*.

Ibid., p. 7b1, instead of *chrém* read *chrédim*.

In Tochmarc Feirbe, l. 282 *ropat sēgaind airechta* should be rendered 'du warst die Zierde der Versammlung', not with the editor 'stattlich waren die Versammlungen'.

In Stokes' edition of Acallam na Senōrach l. 519 *tredan* stands for *trētān*, as the rhyme with *Bēcān* shows.

In Félire² p. 68 read:

[Batar] *būadaig muintir Dar Ercca ri tindrem,
secht n-espuic dēc dōib dar lermuir, dī ōig ingen.*

This quatrain is composed in *dechnad cummaisc*, on which see Thurneysen Ir. T. III, p. 152.

Ibid., p. 98, l. 6 read *iar n-ōgthathchor* 'after a complete revolution'.

In Ir. T. III, p. 8 § 8 the quatrain there quoted may be restored as follows:

*Dia nime nīndermait imm ēcsi n-aird n-amrai,
hē focheird cen dolmai nēim n-ōir deirg form labrai.*

'The God of Heaven has not forgotten me in regard of noble wonderful poetry: 'tis He who puts without delay a brilliance as of red gold upon my utterance'. Notice the rhyme between *focheird* and *deirg*.

Ibid., § 9, read:

*Immon cathbarr, imma clēthe co rrīan rēilseng,
immon rīg rēil, immon ngrēin a hinchaiḃ Éirenn,
immon ndaig nderg ndergōir buidi batar ūli,
immon mbarr fotallat ūli, imm Flann Midi.*

'Around the helmet, around the roof-tree, far as the bright airy sea, around the brilliant king, around the sun that shines over Erin,¹ around the ruddy flame of yellow red gold there were gathered many: around the diadem under which all find shelter, around Flann of Meath'.

Ibid., p. 10, § 11:

*Lūaidi do gabair ngraisnig ngrip
for faichthib andre trogain tricc.*

'You sport your swift racing steed upon a woman's lawns in the early morning'.

Ibid., § 13:

*Fō fer Fiada, fō flaith fira, fō frēn firbalcc,
fō rī nōebnert tria nem fōenbrecc, fō rī rigmacc.*

'A good man is the Lord, a good prince of truth, a good truly strong root; a good king of holy strength throughout the outspread color-flecked Heaven, a good king is the royal Son'.

Ibid., p. 12, § 18:

*Ardri Éle airechtach, cōem in cēle cōimsercach:
sochaide 'sa hoidid ūair ō chlōidem chrūaid chōimeltach.*

'The high king of Ely, holder of assemblies, beloved is the friend-loving companion: many are in cold death from his hard beautifully hilted sword'. As the rhymes *Éle* (for O. Ir. *Ēli*): *cēle* and *oidid*: *clōidem* (for O. Ir. *clōidiub*) show, the poem to which this stanza belongs cannot be older than the eleventh century. *ō* stands for *ōa*.

Ibid., p. 16, § 41:

*Maith tra sin, a maicc Chellaig, a ūi Brain!
do grūad chorera, do barr cass, do rosc glass amal in nglain,
nīrscara fri horddan n-oll airt² maras mong for muir!*

'Excellent that now, O son of Kelly, grandson of Bran! Thy crimson

¹A poetical way of saying that Flann was king of all Ireland.

²Or perhaps in *n-ed*.

cheek, thy curly hair, thine eye blue as crystal—thou shalt not part from high dignity so long as a crested wave remains upon the sea’.

Ibid., p. 17, § 46 and p. 45, § 68:

*Is hē Feidūmith in rī diarbo monar n-ōenlathi
aithrigad Connacht cen chath ocus Mide do mannrad.*

‘It is Fedilmid the king, for whom it was the work of a single day to dethrone (the king of) Connaught without battle and to destroy Meath’.

Ibid., p. 18, § 50 and p. 46, § 72:

*Ba hed ascnam forsin flaith ma dia ndernta a chomol:
in Rī beres breith for cāch, a šerc ocus a omon.*

‘This were to reach the Kingdom of Heaven if you could accomplish both together: to love and to fear the King who passes judgment on all’.

Ibid., § 51 and p. 46, § 73 (cf. *Scēla Cano*, *Anead.* I 12, 25):

*Is ard nūall aiges imm Choire na nDrūd:
dirsan, a Rī roithes grēin nach i cēin domrala ūad!*

‘Loud is the uproar which rages around the Caldron of the Druids¹: alas! oh King who makest the sun run, that it has not fallen to my lot to be far from it’.

Ibid., p. 29, § 69, p. 49, § 89 and p. 102, § 192:

*Nīrb ingnad i tig Chrundmāil cāilfinnach
salann for arān cen imm: is menann
rosecc feōil a muintire amal seccas rūsc imm chrann.*

‘It was no wonder (to get) in Crunnmael’s slender-wattled house salt on bread without butter: ’tis evident, the flesh of his family has shrunk as shrinks the bark around a tree’.

Ibid., p. 38, § 24 and p. 102, § 187:

*Fēgaid ūaib sair fothūaid a mmuir mūd milach!
adba rōn rebach rān rogab lān līnad.*

‘Behold ye to the northeast the glorious monsterful sea! the abode of sportive glorious seals is in full tide’.

Ibid., p. 50, § 91:

*Ni ba dūnad cen rīga, ni ba filī cen scēla,
ni ba ingen manip fīal; nī maith cīall neich nad lēga.*

‘It were no encampment without kings, nor a *filī* without stories, nor a maiden unless she be generous; not good is the sense of any one who does not read’.

Ibid., p. 51, § 95:

*Nīm āes n-argart nā hamnert nā hamlūth. Mo menmae macc
Maire macc Dē. Dūlīb Dē is mō Dia. Din barr di theoraib soillsib
adneut nīth.* ‘Neither old age has hindered me nor strengthlessness nor lack of vigor. My mind (is on) the Son of Mary, the Son of God.

¹The name of a whirlpool between Ireland and Scotland.

God is greater than the creatures of God. From on high from three lights I await the strife (of death)'. Note the tmesis of *nimargart*. As to the enclitic *argart* cp. *ni argart* Wb 31 c 25; *nandargart* Ml 53 d 9. The 'three lights' are thus explained in Tenga Bithnūa § 161: *dū i failet na teora soilse ata dech lēghair .i. soilse in Rīg thidnaicis in flaith, soilse na nēb dia tidnacar, soilse na fatha tidnacar* and, i.e. the splendor of God, that of the saints, and of the Kingdom of Heaven. A paraphrase of the whole would be as follows: 'Neither old age nor lack of strength and vigor hinder me from fixing my mind upon Christ, the Son of God, who is greater than His works. I await calmly the struggle of death, in which (i.e. in the fight against the demons for possession of the soul) the three heavenly lights will assist me'.

Ibid., p. 57, § 107:

*Bairri brēo bithbūadach,
būaid mbetha brethadbail,
ruithen rēil rathamra
ruithniges Ebermag,
lia lūagmar lainderda,
nī lūad nach liūin.
Ēo ōrda ilchrothach,
ūaisliu cach cāinchumtach,
aire ard ollairbrech
ērnes cach n-olladlaic
do buidnib balcBanba,
barr broga Briūin.*

'Bairri,¹ ever-triumphant flame, glory of the world of judgments vast, bright ray of marvellous grace that illumines Eber's Plain,² brilliant precious stone, it is not the praise³ of any weakling. Golden many-colored salmon, loftier than any fair structure, noble chief of vast hosts who grants every great desire to the hosts of mighty Banba, diadem of Brion's land'.

Ibid., p. 63, § 128:

*Scēla mōra, maidm catha, dīth flatha Findruis,
rofersat Gaill grafainn fornn, atbath ar tonn indmais.*

'Great tidings: rout of battle, loss of the chief of Findross; the Norse have won the race on us, our wave of wealth has perished'.

Ibid., § 129:

*Mo chara-sa Cndmīne caras iath nĒle n-achtach,
bid fāilid frim dāmīne cia domecma cēt marcach.*

¹i.e. St. Finnbarr of Cork.

²i.e. the South of Ireland.

³Or perhaps 'he is not to be mentioned'.

'My own friend Cnamine, who loves the deedful land of Ely, he will welcome my company though a hundred horsemen should come with me'.¹

Ibid., p. 65, § 132 and p. 182:

Tuc in mbairgin, tale in mbairgin oculus blog don blonaic mōir:
maith t'athair oculus do māthair, tuc in mblāthaig ina deōid.

'Bring the cake, give the cake, and a piece of the big side of bacon! Your father and mother are worthy people—after that bring the butter-milk!' With the rhyme *mōir: deōid* cp. *cōlaig: Brōnaig* Tig. A. D. 562; *ceōlda: crōda*, Imram Máiledūin § 164.

Ibid., § 132 and p. 182:

A ben fuil isin chuiliu, in tabrai biad do duiniu?
in tabrai dam, a ben bān, saill, loimm, imm oculus arān?
Atā form meni tuca² biad in dorn:
bēr-sa th' enech, a ben bān, is indisfet dom deān.

'Woman that art in the store-room, wilt thou give food to a man? Wilt thou give me, O fair woman, bacon, milk, butter and bread? There is something that I have in mind, if thou dost not put food in my hand: I shall carry off thy honor, O fair woman, and shall tell my tutor'.

Ibid., p. 67, § 3:

Rocūala nī tabair eochu ar dūana;
dobeir anī as duthaig dō: bō.

'I have heard that he does not give horses for songs; he gives what is natural for him: a cow'.

Ibid., p. 68, § 6:

Ōpsa becān gabsus gleith i tīr chāich cen iarfaiǵid:
nicon acca bēolu eich amal bēolu in liathainig.

'Ever since I was little I let my horses graze in anybody's land without asking. I never saw a horse's mouth like the mouth of the Greyface'.

Ibid., p. 69, § 16:

A muintir Murchada mōir, frisnā geib fid nā fiadmōin,
maidm for barngeintib cu Bōinn rīa bar ngallmeirggib
grīansrōill;
sceirdit broig snechta qsa srōin occaib dar Echta imm
iarnōin.

'Ye people of great Murrough, against whom neither forest nor wild moor prevails, the heathen hosts have broken before your Norse battle-

¹Literally, 'chance to me'.

²Or perhaps *tabra*.

standards of sun-bright satin as far as the Boyne. (As they flee) before you across Aughty in the late evening snowflakes¹ break from their noses'.

Ibid., p. 70, § 19:

Cuirn Cūalann, cīa 'sin chūiciud noscongann?

Do Domnall dāilter in buiden būaball.

'The drinking horns of Cualu, who is there in the province to seize them? To Domnall let the host of bugles be dealt!' The horns of Cualu were the emblem and symbol of the kingship of that district.

Ibid., p. 71, § 26:

Brigit būadach,

būaid na fine,

siur Rīg nime,

nār in duine,

eslind luige,

lethan brēo.

Roslacht nōibnem

mumme Gōidel,

rīar na n-ōged,

ōibel ecnai,

ingen Dubthaig,

duine ūallach,

Brigit būadach,

bethad bēo.

'Triumphant Brigid, glory of her kindred, sister of Heaven's King, a noble woman, a danger to perjurers,² a broad-spreading flame. She has reached holy Heaven, the foster-mother of the Gael, the desire of aliens,³ a spark of wisdom, daughter of Dubthach, a proud woman, triumphant Brigid, the living one of life'.

Ibid., p. 72, § 28:

Bendacht ūaim for Ethni n-ollguirm, ingen Domnaill dāiles
bir,

ica n-esbius iar cūairt cathrach fo neim nathrach,

eire ochtair cethrair bachlach sithchenn srathrach, srūaim de
mid.

'A blessing from me on great and glorious Ethne, daughter of Domnall who scatters spears; at whose hands, after a round of the city where

¹i.e. their panting breath, not 'blood', as I rendered in 'Ancient Irish Poetry', 2 ed. p. 75.

²Literally, 'a danger to swear by', i.e. it is dangerous to commit perjury in invoking her.

³Literally, 'guests, visitors', in contrast to the native Gaels.

I got but snake poison, I drained a river of mead, (such as would be) a load for twenty-four longheaded pack-saddled churls'.

Ibid. p. 72:

*Murchad Maisten,
macc rīg Ērenn, ērge Coire
Breccāin barrdeirgg dar brug mBanba,
marcach eich dēin dorngūalannaig,
dergaid gaithlenn, grīb gēratta.
Gilla gargmōr ic guin idal,
arsid Eorpa, ēcne tuinne,
tōeb fri bratt ngorm, glan a glaissin,
ūa rīg Chaissū cornbūaballaig,
cuilēn miadach mīn mērfota.*

'Murrugh of Mullaghmast, son of Ireland's King, who rises like Breccan's red-topped whirlpool over the land of Banba, rider of a swift handbreadth-shouldered steed, reddener of spears, heroic griffin. A rough big boy at slaying idolators, Europe's veteran, salmon of the wave, his side in a dark-blue cloak of brilliant woad, grandson of the King of Cashel of bugle drinking-horns, distinguished whelp, gentle, and with tapering fingers'. The Murchad here mentioned is probably identical with the King of Leinster of that name who defeated the Norse under Ragnall A. D. 994. See my 'Ancient Irish Poetry', 2 ed., p. 75. By the 'idolators' the pagan Norse are meant. If *bratt gorm* is here a kenning for 'shield', as may well be, translate perhaps: 'trusting in a dark-blue shield'.

Ibid., p. 73, § 30:

*Cuir fáilti frimm, a rī Rōirenn, a lind buidi būaball,
a glass ar oscaraib Ērenn, a chostadaig Chūalann.*

'Bid me welcome, O King of Roiriu, thou yellow liquor of drinking-horns, thou lock against the dunces of Erin, thou that contestest Cualu!'

Ibid., p. 75, § 36:

*A óclaig óic, nochon urusa do thathair,
is mōr do nert, is acat atā cert Cathair.*

'Thou young warrior, 'tis not easy to revile thee; great is thy power: Cathair's right is thine'.

Ibid., p. 78, § 47:

*Femen indiu is ferr a chāch mēt a thened is a thūath,
ēolchaire na nōeb cen dīth, crích dian cōem cēolchaire chūach.*

'Femen today is better than ever, what with the number of its hearths and tribes; land without decay, for which the saints long, land to which the song of cuckoos is dear'.

Ibid., p. 78, § 48:

*Rúaidrí Rátha Broccáin bricc, bēimm dobeir nathair do neoch,
 úa rí Cháirín, clann bráthar Briain, is dath ind fíacha for a
 eoch.*

'Bory of variegated Rath Brocain, sting such as an adder imparts to all, grandson of the King of Carn, offspring of Brian's brother, with the raven's color upon his horse'.

Ibid., p. 79, § 50:

*A gíllí glúair, geib dūain mBriain, geib dūain mBriain, a gíllí
 glúair!*

*Brian broga in būair, būaid fer Fál, būaid fer Fál Brian
 broga in būair.*

'Thou brilliant lad, sing a song of Brian! sing a song of Brian, thou brilliant lad! Brian of the land of kine, glory of the men of Fal, glory of the men of Fal is Brian of the land of kine'.

Ibid., p. 82, § 60:

*Conchobur cath merggech mōr tentech trēn,
 dūburgud d'arm rindech rūad grindech gēr.*

'Connor of great fiery strong standard battalions, hurler of pointed red fierce sharp weapons'.

Ibid., p. 83, § 65:

*Aine ingen Manannāin maicc Lir, in lā rolēic a fer
 dotāet si anīar ar mo chenn-sa co mbīmm-sea thīar ina tig
 sech cach tech.*

'Aine, daughter of Manannan son of Ler, on the day when she left her husband she comes from the west for me, so that I am in the west in her house beyond every house'.

Ibid., § 69:

*A Choimdiu, cluinte mo nūal oc nūagud do scēl!
 is tū as dīliu līm-sa dīb, a Rī nime nēl.*

'O Lord, hear my cry as I tell Thy story anew. Of all in it Thou art dearest to me, O King of the Heaven of clouds'.

Ibid., p. 86, § 86:

*A maicc rí na Cairce a Cūalainn, fín duit is mid mailte
 mōidim;*

is frit, a mīlid a Málainn, dālainn dorrib ic Rōirinn.

'O son of the King of the Rock out of Cualu, I vow to you wine and . . .¹ mead; with you, o warrior from Malu, I make a tryst in earnest at Roiriu'.

Ibid., p. 87, § 98:

¹*mailte* (in rhyme with *Cairce*) is obscure to me. It is possibly a loan from Engl. *malt*.

*Descert Laigen longphortach, līmtha ⁊ n-airm rigni rūada,
clanda finda Fergusa, fir dia ndernus-sa dūana.*

'The men of South Leinster of the many encampments, whose rigid red weapons are polished, fair children of Fergus, men for whom I have made songs'.

Ibid., p. 88, § 103:

*A rī Femen, fāilte frim-sa, a rith mara buirb tar brūachaib,
a gnūis roderg, a rind ratha, a chomferg catha fri Crūachain.*

'King of Femen, bid me welcome, thou rush of the fierce sea across the borders, thou ruddy face, thou star of grace, thou fury of battle against Croghan'.

Ibid., p. 88, § 107:

*Ingen lāich as luchra ⁊ Laignib nach len locht,
comsolus eter a fāilgib is a folt.*

'Daughter of the most brilliant warrior from Leinster, to whom no fault clings: equally resplendent both in her arm-rings and her hair'.

Ibid., p. 89, § 112:

*Monūarān, a ūgaire, notmairfet dīc Almaine:
mar rachūala in cūgaire noco cluinfea in damgaire.*

'Alas, O shepherd! warriors of Almain will slay you: you will not hear the bellowing of the deer as you have heard the cuckoo's cry', i.e. you will be slain before the fall.

Ibid., p. 91, § 128:

*Cuīrn maicc Donnchada dlegait buidechus, buide benn-
gella:*

francaig fognama¹, fine chuindgeda, santaig senmeda.

'The drinking horns of Donagh's son are entitled to thanks, horn-pledges of yellow drink: the serving Franks,² an importunate³ race, are greedy of old mead'.

Ibid., p. 92, § 135:

*Less Rūadrach rebānach, 'sē slūagach sribānach,
less n-ēnach n-aīlēnach, less fērach fidānach.*

'The sportive court of Rory, and it full of hosts, a constant stream; a court full of birds and islet plots, a grassy wooded court'.

Ibid., p. 93, § 142:

*'Can as tic macc lēgind?'
'Ticim o Chlūain chēlbīnd;
iar lēgad mo lēgind
tēgim sis co Sord.'*

¹The MS. has *fochama*. Read perhaps *frichnama*.

²i.e. the Frankish (i.e. Gaulish) mercenaries. See above p. 35.

³Literally, 'of asking'.

'Indis scēla Clūana!'

'Indisfet 'na cūala:

Sinnaig imma hūaga

ethait brūana bolg.'

'Whence comes the son of reading?' 'I come from sweet-omened Cluain; after finishing my reading I go down to Swords'. 'Tell tidings of Cluain!' 'I will tell what I have heard: foxes around its graves, devour morsels of bellies.' Cluain probably stands for Clonmacnois, and the description of its deserted state seems to point to its destruction by Vikings.

Ibid., p. 100, § 176:

Tallad a ulcha de istig oīl:

frim fer cumtha nochorbo chōir.

'His beard was taken off him in the drinking-house: to my companion it was not fair'.

Ibid., p. 103, § 195:

Ri Éle cuin tēit immach slūaigedach,

nī thora ammuich is ē slān Rigbardān.

'When the King of Ely goes forth ready for a hosting, Riordan will not reach home unscathed'. Another example of *tora*, the enclitic of *do-rou*, is found in SR 2747: *nīrtora dīlū* 'no deluge will reach us'.

VIII. Notes on Thurneysen's 'Handbuch des Alt-irischen'.

§ 22.5. In later MSS. *x* is also written for *ks*, as in *éxe*, Corm. § 150 (YBL).

§ 23. *h* often stands for *s* in later MSS., as *inna hesom*, Anecd. II 60, 31.

§ 40. *didiu* should not be classed with weak-stressed words like *tra*. It has sufficient stress to rhyme.

§ 51. The archaic form *dea* continues to be used in Old- and early Middle-Irish in the sense of a pagan deity as distinguished from *día* 'God'.

§ 63 c. The form *tūissech* for *tōissech* arose under the influence of *tūs*.

§ 64. In Old-Ir. poetry *druí* is always disyllabic, gen. *druād*, n. pl. *druūd*.

§ 69. *i* is preserved also before *nn*, as in *rofinnadar*.

§ 76. We have the same phenomenon in early loan-words such as *lubar* from Lat. *labor*, *popa* (*pupu*) from Lat. *papa* &c.

§ 79. With *tílchaib* MI 14a 9 cp. *forsin tílich*, Anecd. I 5, 29.

§ 119. Norse *Dungaðr* = Ir. *Dūnchad*.

§ 162. Palatalisation of *cht* is also found in *glēnuicht* (: *cuirp*)¹ SR 1358.

§ 201. The curious spelling *arbeits* in SP is hardly a clerical error, as it recurs repeatedly in *Imram Brain* and elsewhere.

§ 224. For *tlaith* read *tlāith* = W. *tlawd*.

§ 238.1. For 'wert der Name' read 'geliebter Name' (*inmain n-ainm*).

§ 247. In archaic poetry the dual *macc* occurs without the addition of *dā*.

§ 250.1. The dative after comparatives does not always denote the object of comparison, but may have the function of the instrumental, as e.g. *ōibniti in tech for tichtain* 'the house is the more delightful through your coming'.

Ibid. 3. In archaic language the dative occurs without *do*, as e.g. *gaire Caeur* 'short life to Caier', Corm. § 698; *faircditer mairc mathi maccaib sau sochraite*, ib. § 1172.

§ 261. With *Bibracte* 'abode of beavers' cp. the place-name *Connacht*.

§ 265. The fem. suffix *-rad* also forms collectives of nouns denoting animals, as *damrad* 'a herd of deer'.

§ 272. Ir. *Benēn* does not come directly from *Benignus*, but from *Benegnus* (pronounced *Benengnus*¹), the form used in Celtic Latin. Cf. *benegni* Wb 22d. Similarly W. *swyn*, Ir. *sēn* from *segnum*.

§ 318. In *cathre* Zeitschr. VIII 198 § 18 we have an old acc. pl. of *cathir*, for later *cathracha*.

§ 322.1. The older form *suēd*, gen. sg. of *suī* (W. *hywydd*), for later *suād*, is preserved in the proper name *Messinsuad*, Lism. L. p. 356, 'fosterson of the sage'.

Ibid. 4. An older form of *glēo* is *glēu*, Ir. T. III p. 10, 8, in rhyme with *bēu*.

§ 323. A later form *fichtiu* for the acc. pl. *fichtea* occurs in Rawl. B 502, p. 156b in rhyme with *Bricriu*.

§ 329.2. The Hiberno-Latin form answering to Ir. *Ēriu* is *Everio*, which occurs e.g. in the Reichenau codex of Adamnan's Life of Columba.

§ 337. Add the voc. sg. *a maig!* LU 51b.

§ 338. The oldest form of the gen. sg. of *clū* is *clūē*, Ir. T. III p. 38 § 27.

§ 340.1. A dat. sg. *mī* occurs often in Old-Ir. poetry.

§ 366. In archaic poetry *bith* 'ever' is used independently, as *nad etsa bās bith*, Amra Col. C. § 98.

§ 388. An older form *cōice* 'fifty' occurs in Zeitschr. VI 310, 1.

§ 391. The oldest form of the preverbal *ceta-* is *cete-*, which occurs in *cetegabsat*, Zeitschr. VIII 305, 26.

§ 407. *ol* (*or*) with plural subject: *or ind Albanaich*, Anecd. I 3, 13; *ar an òic*, ib. 4, 11; *or inn òic*, ib. 14.

§ 414. The older form *de* of the infixed pron. *da* is found in *condetubert* Zeitschr. VIII 308, 34; ib. *condegegoin* 309, 2; *condetapert* Anecd. III 60, 24.

§ 428. Add *berthis si* 'she carries it', Zeitschr. VI 310, 9.

§ 431. Under *fiad* add: 3 sg. m. *fiada*, Anecd. II 13, 8.

§ 432. Under *tri* add: 1 pl. *trín*, Anecd. III 49, 1.

§ 438. Add *foræ* 'upon his', O'Mulc. 537, *doa* 'to his', Anecd. III 48, 5; 58, 9; *inai* 'in his', Anecd. III 48, 6.

§ 441. Add *ba hae hē* 'it was his', Amra Col. C. § 19.

§ 457. Add *sechiō ðenrainn* 'from whatever single part', Karlsr. Aug.

§ 459. Add *in hē ba nā hē*, O'Mulc. 403; *im ba bās ba bethu*, Wb 23 b 32.

§ 477. *innunn* seems to stand for *inn-sund*.

§ 479. A 3 pl. *cadessine* occurs in Rawl. B 502, p. 118b 47.

§ 487.4. An older form *are* for *ara* occurs in *arerāncatar*, CZ VIII 308, 34; *arctoing* Anecd. III 59, 4.

§ 557. Add *taccru-sa*, Anecd. III 28, 1; *biru-sa*, ib. 15; *nī cuilliu*, ib. 57, 15; *ibiu*, Trip. 54, 15; *gaibiu*, ib. 14; *nodfōidiu*, TBC (Wi.) p. 850.

§ 653. Add *atabiu*, Zeitschr. III 216, 5.

§ 654. Add 2 sg. *condasciche*, Rawl. B 502, p. 83b 14.

§ 658. In Ir. T. III 105, 31 *rofēsid* : *Dēsib*.

§ 682. *siaicht*, Zeitsch. VIII 306, 31.

§ 711. *alte* 'was reared', Zeitschr. VIII 311, 17.

§ 723. Add *intinnscital*, Zeitschr. VIII 175.

§ 731. Add *greimm* 'hold' v. n. of *grennim*.

§ 758. Add *olbúi*, Laws II 254, 7.

§ 767. Add *cēin nombō*, Imr. Māiledūin (poem) § 221.

§ 768. Add sg. II *bie*: *tusa for urchra bie*, Anecd. II 11, 31.

§ 772. Add *atin buidig de* 'we are grateful for it', Anecd. I 5, 18.

§ 818. Add *nad arrchiuīr* Zeitschr. VIII 308, 7.

§ 820. Add *cenmibī*, Ēr. VII 148 § 8.

§ 836. Add *la ndalta* 'with their fosterson', LL 311a 23.

§ 907. Ir. *cnāir* is borrowed from the Hibern.-Latin form *icnuarius*.

¹Cf. the spelling *singnum* in YBL (Corm. § 979).

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